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• AND •

FORTUNE WEEKLY.

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY.

COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE

ISLAND NUMBER TEN.

By A SELF MADE MAN.



Crash went the boat against the wreck, sending the three boys floundering about. The sea rushed in at the shattered gunwhale. At that critical moment a girlish figure suddenly appeared at the bow of the sunken craft and waved her hand.

Fame and Fortune Weekly

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY

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PRICE 5 CENTS.

ISLAND NUMBER TEN

OR,

The Secret of the Sunken Gold Ship

By A SELF-MADE MAN

CHAPTER I.

FROM THE RIVER.

"Hello, what's that?" exclaimed Jack Decker, a stalwart, sun-burned American boy of perhaps eighteen years, as a succession of female screams broke upon his ears.

Jack, attired in a thin, white suit of duck, such as was worn by the plantation overseers, and other male inhabitants in the island of Hayti, was bossing a bunch of negroes at work in a cultivated field near a narrow river.

He stood under the partial shelter of a wide-spreading tree, with a whip, the badge of his authority, under his arm, while the laborers toiled out in the full glare of the tropical sunshine.

The plantation was owned by Monsieur Vincent Laroche, a dark-skinned, wealthy Frenchman, whose reputation as a hard taskmaster was known pretty well all over the island.

He had fields of coffee, cocoa, tobacco, cotton and ginger under cultivation, and a considerable force of native negroes, under five overseers, to attend to them.

Mons. Laroche expected his overseers to get all the work possible out of the help, and were instructed not to spare the whip on the laggards.

His orders were faithfully carried out by all the overseers but the young American, whose young heart revolted at an indiscriminate application of the lash.

By adopting a more humane, but none the less firm method, the boy got a full quota of work out of the blacks, but he incurred the planter's displeasure thereby.

Laroche, who had picked Jack up in Kingston, where he

had been stranded, would have discharged him from his employ, after a trial, only he found him useful in many ways upon his place, and paid him less than the usual wages.

During the three months Jack had been on the plantation he made himself very popular with the Creoles, who preferred to work under him, because they knew they wouldn't be whipped.

But the boy had other ways of punishing them if they "sojered" on him, and they soon found that he had a sharp eye, and that nothing escaped him.

At the time our story opened Jack and his gang were in the coffee field, and things were going along in good shape when screams attracted the lad's attention.

Out from a thick mass of bushes, which hid the river at that point, dashed a lightly clad girl of fifteen, whose ebony face was convulsed with a kind of terror.

"Oh, massa Jack! come help me, for de lub ob Heaben. Misse Linda she fall in ribber. Berry soon drown no help come," cried the girl, wringing her hands in a helpless way.

"What!" cried Jack, dropping the whip, "has Miss Vernon fallen into the river?"

"Iss, massa Jack. She fall in all ober."

"Whereabouts?"

The girl, who was Linda Vernon's maid, pointed beyond the bushes, and Jack started off for the spot on a dead run, leaving the hands to look after themselves.

Susanne, the maid, hurried after him, and both disappeared in a twinkling.

A minute later Mons. Laroche appeared in the field and looked around for his young overseer.

Not seeing him anywhere, he grew hot under the collar, and began swearing in French, which he only spoke when he was mad, or when talking to a countryman not well up in English.

Leaving him to his ill-humor we will follow Jack, who speedily reached the bank of the river and spied the imperiled young lady coming up for the second time at a little distance from the shore.

Without a moment's hesitation Jack threw off his wide straw hat and plunged into the water.

He was a fine swimmer and reached the girl just as she was sinking for the last time.

Her strength was already exhausted by her fruitless struggles, and she was feebly beating the water with her hands when he grabbed her from behind.

She tried to catch hold of him in her desperation, but he held her in such a way that she couldn't get a grip on him, and then he gradually made his way to the bank and dragged her out of the water.

He laid her on her stomach, with her head lower than her body, and the water she had swallowed ran out of her mouth.

With Susanne's help she was partially revived, and then, taking her in his arms, he carried her to the long, low dwelling-house of the planter, some little distance away.

By the time he reached the wide veranda Miss Vernon was somewhat recovered.

Jack resigned her to the care of Susanne and another black woman, and was going back to his work when the fair girl caught him by his damp sleeve, and said:

"You saved my life, Jack Decker, and I am very grateful to you."

"You are welcome, Miss Linda. I am glad I was on hand to rescue you," replied the young American, flushing under the girl's earnest glance.

"It was brave of you to jump into the river after me," she said.

"Not at all, Miss Linda. I'm a regular water duck."

"At any rate you saved my life, and I sha'n't forget the obligation. I suppose you must go now?" she said, in a regretful way.

"Yes. I have a score of blacks to look after in the coffee field this morning, and they are likely to take advantage of my absence."

"Well, I shall see you this evening when you are at liberty," she said, with a smile that made his heart beat quickly.

Jack bowed and took his departure.

As he was entering the field he came face to face with the planter.

"Where have you been?" demanded Mons. Laroche, with a dark look.

Jack explained the cause of his absence from the field.

"What! Miss Vernon fell in the river?" exclaimed the planter.

"Yes, monsieur," answered Jack, respectfully.

"How came that to happen?" asked the Frenchman, looking disturbed.

"I couldn't tell you. I didn't ask her, as she was only half conscious when I pulled her out."

"You carried her to the house?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Was not her maid with her?"

Jack nodded.

"It was she who gave the alarm," he said.

"I caught that rascal, Antoine, resting himself under a tree. I had no whip or I would have cut his back to ribbons. He shall have fifty lashes to-night, and if he utters a cry I'll double the measure. See to it that he loses no more time."

The planter passed on toward the house.

"Fifty lashes," muttered Jack, "and last night he got thirty. Laroche seems to have taken a grouch against him, and I fear he will not let up on him till he kills him. The cruel treatment these Creole workers get on this plantation makes my blood boil. No wonder they run away every once in a while. The wonder is that men who by law are slaves no longer are willing to labor on this place at any price. The trouble is that according to Laroche's arrangements he pays off only once in six months, and if a hand leaves of his own accord within that time he loses all his wages. That's what keeps me here, but in three months I'll be paid, and then——"

He came suddenly on Antoine, who, instead of being at work, was standing under a tree looking mighty ugly.

"Antoine, why are you not at work?" asked Jack, sternly, but making no move to use the whip he had picked up.

The man looked at him in a savage way.

"I just met Monsieur Laroche, who came here while I was temporarily absent, and he told me he caught you idling. You are to receive fifty lashes for it this evening. He said if he had had a whip with him he'd have laid it on your back."

"Curses on his whip, and the hand that uses it. So I'm to receive fifty more, eh, and I had thirty last night?"

The speaker showed his white teeth in a horrible grin.

"You seem to be treated worse than any man on the plantation. Why do you stay and put up with it? You are not a slave. Slavery is a thing of the past. It cannot be on account of the wages coming to you, for you could have left three months ago when you were paid off with the others. What is it keeps you here?"

"I have my reasons," retorted the man, doggedly.

"With fifty lashes in prospect you will still remain?" asked Jack.

The black grinned horribly again.

"Largarette whipped me last night—it will be your turn to-night," he said, with almost a chuckle.

"My turn?" exclaimed Jack.

"Yes—I belong to your gang. Each overseer whips his own men."

"Never!" cried Jack. "I will put the lash on no man's back."

"Take care," chuckled Antoine, "you may catch it yourself. He has it in for you, mars' Jack. You are too easy for his liking. Susanne told me this morning that he intends to break you in with the whip, or make you feel it yourself."

"Make me feel it?" cried Jack, indignantly. "I guess not. I am a free-born American, and the man who strikes me with a whip, or with his hand, will have cause to regret it."

"You mean that?" asked the Creole, eagerly.

"I do."

"You don't know this French—dog!" hissed Antoine. "He is a fiend when aroused. He is fawning and gentle to Miss Linda, whose guardian he is, as a cat with paws of velvet, but you have seen him use his talons at the least resistance from others. May my hate—my burning, bitter hate, wither and strike the villain's heart!"

The Creole's face worked convulsively, and his fists clenched in a savage way.

"Would you know why I hate him?" he went on. "Why I remain here watching for the chance that ere long will be mine to end his rascally life with a blow at his heart? Listen, boy, and I will tell you. I once loved a young woman—loved her with all my heart—with all the intensity of my soul. I was to marry her. We were happy in each other's love. But the evil day soon came upon us. That villain, Laroche, saw her. He was taken with her beauty, and began to persecute her with his attentions. He wanted to marry her. She fled from him, but he pursued her to the home of her mother, on the mountain side. In seeking to elude him she lost her footing on the edge of a chasm and fell to her death. He killed her as surely as if he had driven a knife in her heart, and I will kill him as surely as the sun shines this minute."

Antoine's voice died in a vengeful hiss.

"He hates me because I won her love, and he, a big planter, was repulsed by her. It is joy to his villainous soul to see me under the lash, and I put up with it because I feel that the hour of my revenge is drawing near. I might have killed him a score of times here, on his own plantation, but that does not satisfy me. He shall meet his death on the mountain side—at the very spot and in the same way that my Jenny died. And when I hold him helpless over the chasm, I will laugh at his cries for mercy. They will be music to my ears, as the sound of the lash on my back has been to his. I will taunt and revile him, and then—then when I have played with him long enough—I will let him drop like a stone, and listen for the rebound of his hated body on the rocks below. Then only will my hate be satisfied."

Jack shuddered as he listened to the Creole.

That he meant every word he had uttered there seemed to be no doubt.

Clearly Monsieur Laroche's life was in danger from this man.

As an employee and overseer Jack asked himself was it not his duty to warn the planter of the deadly peril which menaced him?

To do that was to betray this man who had suffered so much at the Frenchman's hands.

The boy realized that he was on the horns of a dilemma.

CHAPTER II.

THE VENGEFUL CREOLE.

There was a spell of silence for some minutes.

Both were thinking, but their thoughts were widely different.

Suddenly the Creole turned on the boy.

"Mars' Jack. You love, too—am I not right?" he said, with a peculiar grin.

"What do you mean?" cried Jack, a slight flush reddening the thick coat of tan impressed by the tropical sun.

"Ha! I have sharp eyes—so has Susanne. We both sure you have learned to love Miss Linda."

"Nonsense!" replied Jack, but the word did not ring true.

The Creole chuckled.

"You cannot hide your heart when it dances in your eyes. I have seen how you look at her. It is the look of one who is in love. I know, for have I not loved myself? I am sorry for you, mars' Jack. Where are your eyes that you do not see how the wind blows?"

"How the wind blows?" repeated the boy, mechanically.

"She is the pretty lamb that Laroche has picked out for himself."

"You cannot mean that, Antoine. She is only seventeen, while he is near fifty."

"But he is rich. This plantation is one of the best in Hayti."

"That makes no difference. A lovely girl like her wouldn't mate with a man of his characteristics."

"White women seldom give a thought to the qualities of the men they marry. Money and position in life are what they worship. They leave heart and feeling to the poor blacks."

"I don't see where you got that idea, Antoine. At least, Miss Vernon is not that kind of girl," said Jack, with some energy.

"You do not know her, though you lose your heart to her. Susanne say she and Laroche are to marry in six weeks."

"Six weeks!" exclaimed Jack, looking as if the world had suddenly turned very dreary to him.

"Six weeks," repeated the Creole, showing his teeth; "but he is counting his chickens before they are hatched. He does not know that I, the despised Antoine, will fix him to the mountain chasm before then. That his body will be rotting in the depths of the crevasse where my Jenny met her death. It fills my heart with joy when I think how I shall tear him from his charming bride as he tore my bride from me. It is just that he who sows the whirlwind shall reap it."

Antoine turned away abruptly, walked out into the sunshine and began to work as unconcerned as if there was nothing of any great importance on his mind, and yet he was planning to carry out his fearful purpose that very night.

Jack passed the rest of that day in a kind of wretched dream.

He could not disguise from himself that he did love the fair ward of the French planter, although it seemed the height of audacity on his part to think of such a thing.

Who was he that he dare cast his eyes in such a way on her?

A friendless orphan, cast on a foreign shore, and dependent on his labor for the bread he ate, and the small wages he had contracted to work for.

Was he a suitable match for Linda Vernon, the fairest

flower in all Hayti, even though she, herself, might be considered a pensioner on her guardian's bounty?

Jack had to confess that his pretensions were ridiculous, and yet it is said that true love wipes all barriers away, as indeed it often does.

Monsieur Vincent Laroche, however, was a barrier that, apart from the fact of his purpose to appropriate his ward to himself, would be a mighty difficult obstacle to overcome were Miss Vernon and Jack to join hands against him.

He certainly would not regard with favor anything in common between the girl and his young American overseer.

Evening came at last and the work of the day was over.

The hands went to their quarters to get their supper, while the five overseers went to theirs and ate with other attaches on their own level.

With the exception of Jack they knew their business well, and they had no sympathy in common with the hands they lorded over.

Monsieur Laroche and Miss Vernon, now fully recovered from the effects of her accident, ate together in the dining-room of the house, waited upon by several servants whose skins were a little less dark than those who toiled in the open air, but who stood just as much in awe of the repellant looking planter.

When the meal was over the Frenchman and the girl came out on the veranda to enjoy the cool breezes that swept over the island.

Linda seated herself in a wicker chair and looked expectantly toward the quarters of the overseers.

She expected Jack would make his appearance, as the services he had rendered her that day would afford an excuse for his presenting himself at the house to inquire how she was.

Monsieur Laroche did not sit down.

He had not forgotten Antoine, nor the fifty lashes he intended to have laid on his back that evening.

He, too, looked for the young American to come to the veranda, and when he did not do so within what he considered a reasonable time, he sent a servant to summon him.

Then Jack came.

"I think I told you that Antoine was to be whipped to-night," he said, as they stood out of earshot of the girl.

"Would it not be just as well to overlook his offense this time, monsieur?" said Jack. "Since my return to the field he worked harder than any of the rest."

"You forget yourself, Decker," replied the planter, in no pleasant tone. "Were it not for the fact that you rendered Miss Vernon a great service this morning I would make things unpleasant for you. Hereafter, remember that I permit no suggestions from my employees. That black scoundrel deserves to be skinned alive. Were slavery still an institution on the island I would make that fellow curse the day he was born. You must get rid of your squeamishness about the application of the lash if you expect to remain with me. Your feelings and ideas are weak and foolish."

"They may be in your opinion, monsieur, but I was raised in a country where humanity is something more than

a name," replied Jack. "Every man has an equal chance there, whether he be white, black, red or yellow."

"Enough!" cried the planter, angrily. "Go find that scoundrel and have him brought to the whipping-post and secured. I will be on hand to see that he gets the full fifty lashes. I had intended that you should administer the dose, but as I suspect you would lay them on altogether too light, I shall have Samson attend to the business. He has no love for Antoine, and will make every blow count."

Jack knew better than to hesitate to execute the Frenchman's orders, and with a great sympathy for Antoine he started off to find him.

He knew that the blacks all gathered of an evening outside their quarters to enjoy relaxation from labor in their own peculiar way.

He went straight to the open space in front of the buildings.

He was surprised to find the whole bunch of men and women gathered around somebody who was haranguing them, with a naphtha torch to illuminate the proceedings.

As well as he could make out as he drew near the circle, the stranger was a boy, who appeared to have the gift of speaking down fine.

He seemed to be a traveling peddler, and was either an American or an Englishman.

His pack was hidden by the crowd around, but it was open in front of him.

"Now is your time, my ebony friends," said the boy, glibly. "This is bargain day, and you all come in for it. One day a week I make a dreadful sacrifice of my stock in trade, and this here is the day. Everything is going for nothing on this auspicious occasion."

"For nothin'. Dat berry fine, massa peddler," said one of the women.

"Not absolutely for nothing, my chocolate madam, but next door but one to it, which is almost the same thing. Now here is something that you all need, I mean all you men folks. A magnificent, wide-brimmed straw hat, that couldn't be duplicated in Kingston, or Queenston, or any other royal ton, for double and twice over what I'm asking for it on this here auspicious occasion, which never comes twice on the same plantation—mark that, my colored brethren."

He clapped the hat upon the negro nearest to him.

"There you are. It fits you like the paper on the wall, and makes you look like a regular dude. Buy it, and I'll make you a present of a dollar."

"You mean dat?" cried the Creole, in a doubtful tone. "I t'ink I take it berry quick. Dem berry fine terms. How much you charge?"

"Two dollars, but you shall have it for one."

"Dere one dollar. Now hat mine."

"Nothing surer, my friend."

"Now give me de dollar you promise," said the man, holding out his hand.

"Haven't you got it, you chump? I said two, and I took one—that's making you a present of one, isn't it?"

The Creoles laughed at the purchaser.

"Sold again and got the money," said the boy, briskly. "Who's the next to take advantage of this astounding slaughter of values?"

"I t'ink you make a fool of me," said the disappointed hat purchaser.

"No, my coffee-hued friend, nature has already done that for you," replied the boy peddler, suavely, diving into his bag and pulling out some bright colored ribbon. "Now, my dusky beauties, here's something for you. Don't all speak at once. This ribbon is all that remains of several thousand yards, more or less, that I sold to the wife of the President of the United States before I left that glorious land of the free. I got half a dollar a yard for it, for it's prime quality, doesn't wash out, shrink nor otherwise lose its wear-for-ever quality. It's what we Americans call the cheese, the ne plus ultra, e pluribus unum of all ribbons. I can assure you that it's not made by a trust, and that it bears the union label on the wrapper, which is somewhere at the bottom of my pack and not to be got at just now."

"How much?" asked a girl.

"I would like to make you a present of it, my angel, but I know it would make the other girls jealous of you, so I'll call it two bits a yard, a quarter of a dollar, an English shilling."

"I take two yards."

"Take the piece for a dollar. You'll never get such another chance. Thanks. Sold again and got the——"

At that point the boy's sharp eyes rested on Jack's face, which was lit up by the glare of the naphtha torch.

"Jumping Jehosaphat!" he cried. "It can't be you, Jack Decker, here on this plantation. Hopping periwinkles! Come up and let me get a square look at you."

"Tom Nelson!" exclaimed Jack, equally astonished.

"You've hit it the first trial. Now I know it's you. How in thunder did you turn up here? What are you doing in Hayti, anyway?"

"I might ask you the same question, Tom," said Jack, as they shook hands. "What curious chance has brought you to Hayti? And when did you turn traveling faker?"

The men and women who surrounded them looked on with considerable curiosity as the boys talked together.

Jack explained in a few words how he had been left on the island by a fruit steamer and had picked up the job as overseer on the plantation.

Tom said that a friend had told him that there was a raft of money in peddling notions around among the plantations on the islands in the Caribbean Sea, and he had tackled the business.

"How does it pan out?" asked Jack.

"First rate now that I've got the hang of it. How do you like your job?"

"I don't like it. I'm going to quit when my pay-day comes."

"At the end of the month?"

"No, I wish it was. At the end of six months, three of which I've already put in. The position may be all right on most plantations, but on this one——"

"What's the matter with this one? All plantations look more or less alike to me," said Tom.

"The owner of this one is a Frenchman named Vincent Laroche, and he's a holy terror from the ground floor up."

"Is he? What's the matter with him? Don't he treat you well?"

Before Jack could reply there was a sudden scampering

of the whole bunch of Creoles, leaving the boys to themselves.

Striding toward them, with his face inflamed with anger, came Monsieur Laroche.

"So, this is the way you attend to my orders," he roared at Jack. "Who are you, and what are you doing on my plantation?" he added, turning to Tom.

"I am a traveling merchant," replied Tom, without showing any trepidation at the angry words of the planter. "I carry everything from a cradle to a sheet-anchor in this bag of mine. I'll step up to the house in a minute and——"

"You'll do nothing of the kind. Get off my property at once or I'll have you thrown out into the road. Allons!"

The last word was French for "go," and the speaker evidently meant business.

"All right, my dear sir," replied Tom, coolly. "You're the doctor. Your loss will be somebody else's gain. I had a fine house-lock here," he went on, returning a number of things to his bag, "which I was going to offer you at half price because this is my bargain day, but of course, under the circumstances you will miss the chance of adding a gem to your locks. A few locks are a good thing for an elderly gent like you to have in reserve, for your hair is already getting thin——"

"Sacre!" roared Mons. Laroche, more furious than ever. "Here, Domingo, Henri, Philip—come here, you rascals. Throw this scoundrel off the plantation."

"There is no occasion for your servants to exert themselves on a warm night like this. I know the way out," said Tom, throwing his bag over his shoulders. "Good-by, Jack. I'll see you again, I hope. I won't leave the island for some time yet. A letter will reach me at No. 32 Blank street, Kingston. Let me hear from you."

As he started off a hubbub arose in the direction of the house.

Through the evening air came a shrill female scream that sounded like Miss Vernon's voice.

Other female screams added to the excitement.

Flaring torches flitted around and vanished, and soon a burst of flame lit up the lawn in front of the house.

"Ha! What does this all mean?" cried Mons. Laroche, starting to retrace his steps, while yards ahead of him ran Jack, alarmed by the thought that Linda Vernon was again in danger.

CHAPTER III.

A GIRL'S PLUCK.

A bright glare illumined the lawn as Jack dashed out on it.

One corner of the house was on fire, and the servants were screaming and going on like mad.

The other four overseers were coming up on the run from their quarters where they had been playing cards at the time the sudden excitement started.

Jack looked around for Miss Vernon, but couldn't see her.

Crouching on the ground, with her face buried in her hands, he saw Susanne, her maid.

Grasping her by the arm, he shook her a bit roughly. "Where is Miss Linda?" he asked. "Was it she I heard scream?"

"Oh, oh, massa Jack. Missey Linda carried off."

"Carried off! What do you mean?"

"Iss, by dat rascal Antoine."

"By Antoine?"

"Iss—Iss. He and seberal udder blacks rushed up, grab her, set de house afire, and run off toward mountain yonder."

Jack was astonished at this piece of information.

He had no idea that Antoine entertained any revengeful feelings against the young lady.

The Creole's words that morning had led him to suppose that all his hard thoughts were centered on the planter, who had wronged him so deeply.

However, Jack found on further inquiry that Susanne had told the truth.

Antoine and half a dozen other blacks, fellows who were hand-in-glove with him, had abducted Miss Vernon, and fled toward the mountain range.

Mons. Laroche was furious with rage when he learned the facts.

He swore that he would have Antoine's life, and began organizing a party to pursue the fugitives at once.

Jack and three of the other overseers were called upon to go with the party.

They were armed with rifles and revolvers, the planter being similarly provided, and with half a dozen Creoles to beat the bushes ahead, the expedition started in less than half an hour after the flames had been subdued and the house saved.

Some miles ahead of them Antoine, carrying the unconscious young lady in his stalwart arms, and followed by his comrades, was pushing his way up the mountain side.

He was aiming for the spot where his murdered love had met her death.

The humble hut, once occupied by the girl's mother, was now deserted where it stood on the brink of the crevasse.

Antoine's object in carrying Linda off was for the purpose of drawing the planter to the place where he intended to kill him.

He knew that Laroche would track him and his followers up into the range.

He did not expect that the planter would come alone by any means, but he had his plans for separating him from his party.

As he followed the rude path he cast frequent glances at his fair burden to see if she were coming to her senses.

These glances by degrees awakened new thoughts in his mind.

The girl's beauty began to have an effect on him.

He knew that after this night's work he would be hunted for all over the island, and that there would no longer be any safety for him in Hayti.

For some time he had had a boat hidden in a sequestered nook on the river.

To it he had conveyed provisions and water sufficient to

last him on a trip he had in view to a long, low tropical reef known as Island Number Ten.

His original intention was to go there entirely alone, for very strong reasons which the story will develop; but the charms of his beautiful prisoner gradually decided him to take her with him, try to win her love and marry her.

In time, under the peculiar circumstances in which she would be placed, he might persuade her to take the place in his affections of his dead sweetheart.

In his insane desire to decoy the planter to his death, Antoine did not foresee the difficulties and danger he was bringing upon himself.

It is true that he realized in a dim kind of way that an encounter might take place between him and his followers on one side and the rescue party on the other, but he did not anticipate that such a scrap would disarrange his plans.

He and his followers were armed only with knives, which would be useless against the rifles of their pursuers, so that their safety lay wholly in managing to elude those who came in quest of them.

While Antoine and his friends were rapidly climbing the range a boy of about nineteen years, attired in seamen's togs, was seated on a stone close to the deserted hut, in the bright moonlight which lit up the clearing.

His name was Bill Poole, and as he saw no prospect of shelter in sight, he had made up his mind to pass the night in the hut.

"Lord, but I'm hungry," he said. "This comes of parting with the ship's company to navigate around on dry land. I've lost my course—steered the wrong way—and have had to come to anchor in this Lord-forsaken spot. I was sick of salt horse and plum duff, and the swill they called soup, but how I could sail into a mess of that stuff now! My stomach is like a balloon, it's full of nothing but hot air. It's clear that I don't eat till to-morrow some time, when I suppose I'll come to anchor at one of the plantations I'm told are hereabouts. By that time I'll be hungry enough to eat three or four square meals all at one time. Hello! there's somebody coming this way. Maybe he'll be able to direct me to a dinner."

At that moment Tom Nelson, with his pack on his back, sweating furiously and puffing like a grampus, dashed out of the wood into the clearing where the hut was.

He seemed to be in a hurry, which struck Bill Poole as rather strange.

"Hello, my hearty!" cried Poole. "Where bound in such a rush?"

Tom stopped and stared at the lone figure of the sailor boy, and seeing that there was nothing dangerous about him, he advanced quickly.

"Who are you, my pippin?" he asked.

"Bill Poole, orrinary seaman," replied the lonesome party.

"Are you alone?"

"I was until you came along, my barnacle," grinned the young mariner. "You look as if you'd been taking a Russian bath. No wonder, if you've been climbing these mountains with that pack on your back. What's in it?"

"My stock in trade. I'm a traveling peddler, and my name is Tom Nelson. But we must get out of sight, my friend, precious quick."

"Out of sight! What for?" cried the surprised Poole.

"There's a crowd of rascally blackies coming this way, and if they see us they may drop us down into that hole there. At any rate it's likely they'll clean out my pack and pinch all my funds. That would leave me stranded in this benighted land, and I'd have to work my way back to the States."

"Goodness! Are the blacks of this island such scoundrels?" asked Poole.

"I guess not, but this bunch has fired the house on a plantation where I stopped this evening to do some business, and stole the young missus."

"You don't say? They must be a regular lot of land pirates. Where shall we hide?"

"We'll wait in this hut till they go by. Come on, I think I hear them in the distance. Give me a lift with my pack. I'm most fagged out."

Poole grabbed one end of it and they disappeared inside the hut, shutting the door after them.

They found that a ladder led to a small loft which had a sashless window overlooking the open space in front.

Shutting down the trap, and placing the pack on top of it, they stretched themselves on the floor and peered cautiously out in the direction where they heard the sounds of approaching footsteps.

Presently two blacks rushed out into the open, followed in a moment by Antoine, with Miss Vernon in his arms.

Although he had carried her for miles, without rest, he did not appear to be exhausted in the least, as he was a very strong man.

She seemed to be reviving now, and he laid her on the soft turf near the door of the hut.

"I hope these rascals are not going to stop here long," said Tom to his companion. "They might take a notion to investigate this hut."

"And then they'd overhaul us," said Bill. "Lord, but they're a wicked lot, if there are only three of them. Oh, jibboons and marlingspikes! Here's two more of 'em coming out of the bushes."

The last comers ran up to Antoine and reported that Mons. Laroche, with four of the overseers, all armed with rifles, and preceded by six blacks, were coming up the mountain.

They were still two miles way and had divided into two parties, in order to follow two paths.

"Which path is the French dog following?" asked Antoine.

"The one that leads here," was the reply he got.

"Good," gritted the Creole, with a dark look.

At that moment Linda recovered her senses and started up.

"Where am I?" she exclaimed, looking around in a puzzled way.

"In the mountains, Miss Linda," replied Antoine, grimly.

"In the mountains!" she cried. "And you have brought me here?" she added, as she recollected what happened at the plantation.

"I have brought you," he replied.

"What does all this mean, Antoine?" she demanded, imperiously. "How dare you carry me off?"

"My object was to use you merely as a bait to draw Laroche up here, but I have made some change in my plans since."

"Why should you want to draw Monsieur Laroche here?"

"To kill him!" hissed the Creole, savagely.

"Kill him! Are you mad, Antoine?"

"No, I am not mad, miss, though the wrongs I have suffered at the hands of that man were enough to make me so."

"What wrong has he done you? If he has punished you it was because you deserved it."

"It is not the punishment I have suffered at his orders, though Providence knows I deserved but little of it; but a wrong, of which you little dream, that causes me to seek his death. It is even more than a wrong—it is a crime that he was guilty of, the weight of which shall this night draw his soul down to perdition."

"You are certainly out of your senses, Antoine, to speak this way of your employer. You yourself have committed a crime in carrying me off against my will, and the law of the island will be put in force against you. But I feel sorry for you, and would save you, if I can, from the consequences of your rashness. Return me to the plantation at once, and I will intercede in your behalf."

Antoine laughed in a sarcastic way.

"Were I disposed to do as you wish your efforts would be of no service to me. Laroche would have no mercy on me. I know the—dog. But you argue in vain. I have been planning this thing for some days, and now I have carried it out. Soon Laroche, who is now following with his overseers my track, will be here—on this spot, and then, when my comrades have scattered his men I shall make a prisoner of him and kill him."

"You would not dare!"

"You don't know me, miss. I dare even more than that."

"What mean you?"

"I dare look on you as my anticipated bride."

"Me! Your bride! What madness is this? Seek not to terrify me by such folly. Remember the station you are placed in, and remember mine."

"I do," answered Antoine, with a wicked laugh. "Laroche shall lose his prize, and I will possess it. But that will not matter much to him, since he will lose his life as well."

"I see I have been deceived in you. You are a wicked man. I demand that you take me back."

"And I refuse. After I have fulfilled my oath and wiped that villain from the face of the earth it will be necessary that I shall fly from the island. All is prepared to that end, and you shall be the companion of my flight."

"Never! I would die first. Since you refuse to take me back, begone and leave me to find my own way to the plantation."

"Your haughty airs will not save you, miss."

"But my courage shall. I fear not your threats or menacing looks. The blood that flows in my veins comes from ancestry that knew not fear."

"A brave bride is worth fighting for. The bold front you assume serves to increase the liking I have begun to

feel for you. My bride you shall be, so it is useless for you to try to avoid your fate."

"Dog! Rather would I spring into yonder crevasse."

"One bride is enough to lose that way. Come, be reasonable, since there is no escape for you. Let us kiss and seal our love."

"Stand back! Dare not approach me!" cried Linda, as he made a motion to catch her in his arms.

"Dare not, eh? I—your master. You shall see that my will, not yours, miss, is the power that rules your destiny."

He seized her by the arm and was about to draw her towards him when, from her bosom, she suddenly flashed a small, silver-plated revolver before his eyes.

"Release your grasp or I will shoot you as I would a snake!" she cried.

Taken by surprise, Antoine recoiled with an ejaculation.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PLANTER'S FATE.

For a few moments Tom Nelson and Bill Poole, who had been interested observers of the foregoing scene, looked down on as thrilling a scene in real life as any mimic one they had ever witnessed on the stage.

"She's a corker," whispered Tom.

"A regular fire-eater," returned Bill, admiringly.

"She's got him now where the hair is short," said Tom.

"Shiver my fore-top-gallan'-crosstrees, but that's what she has," said Bill, who had a most astonishing store of nautical lingo always at his command.

The most seasoned shellback, afloat or ashore, had not half of his vocabulary.

"You see, rascal, I am not altogether helpless," said Linda. "Your effort to bend me to your will has been a failure. The insults you have been guilty of towards me would almost justify me in shooting you down. But I give you your worthless life. I will now return alone to the plantation. Seek not to detain me. If you do your blood be on your own head."

The girl backed away, keeping her revolver leveled and her eyes on Antoine.

Unfortunately for her another of the Creole's companions suddenly came upon the scene behind her.

"Ha, Pierre, you are just in time. Seize that girl and disarm her," cried Antoine.

The newcomer comprehended the situation and obeyed orders.

He sprang at Linda, seized her by the arm and tore the pistol from her fingers.

She uttered a scream of dismay.

"Again you are mine!" cried the Creole, triumphantly.

"Never! Help! help!" cried the girl, frantically.

Whether the two boys in the hut would have answered her appeal or not will never be known, for at that moment Jack Decker suddenly dashed from the bushes, rifle in hand, and sprang to Linda's rescue.

With a blow he stretched the black man in the dust and caught the girl on his arm.

"Jack!" cried Linda, recognizing him with a cry of joy.

"Yes, Miss Linda."

"You will protect me?"

"With my life if need be," he replied resolutely.

Antoine was taken back by the fresh turn of events.

But he quickly recovered himself.

"So it's you, Mars' Jack?" he said, mockingly. "You would play the hero and step between me and my new bride."

"Your new bride! You must be crazy. What do you mean, Antoine, by running off with Miss Vernon? What purpose had you in view?"

"That need not concern you. Resign this proud miss to me and return the way you came before I forget the friendship I feel toward you."

"Resign Miss Vernon to you. What do you take me for?"

"You refuse?"

"I certainly do. If you wish to save your own life fly at once, for Monsieur Laroche and three of the overseers, backed by several of the hands, are fast approaching this spot. My duty demands that I capture you, but, knowing the fate that would be meted out to you in that case, I do not want to be a party to your death. Fly then at once and save yourself."

The Creole laughed wickedly.

"Since you won't take advantage of my forbearance you must suffer for it. Down with him," he added, turning quickly to his comrades.

"Stand back!" cried Jack, raising his rifle. "The first who dares advance shall receive a bullet in his brain."

One negro, more active and cunning than the others, picked up a stone and flung it with such good aim at the brave boy that Jack staggered back dazed and bleeding.

Then the others jumped in on him and secured him.

"Bind his arms," ordered Antoine. "Gag the girl, Pierre, and away with her to the rocks, where I'll join you soon."

He stepped forward and picked up the rifle that had fallen from Jack's hand.

Then he grimly watched the boy's fruitless struggle in the hands of his four comrades.

"Throw him into the hut and shut the door," he said, after Jack had been rendered helpless.

His orders were obeyed.

"Away, my comrades. I hear the approach of the enemy. Decoy them down yon path, while I will try to cut off the French scoundrel and settle scores with him. Be off."

After one shrill scream that echoed from rock to rock, and reached the ears of Mons. Laroche and one of his overseers, who with three of the blacks were coming up the path that led to the hut, Linda was gagged and borne off by a couple of the Creoles.

After disposing of Jack the rest of the party followed them while Antoine retired into the shelter of the bushes.

Tom, of course, had recognized his friend Jack when that brave lad rushed up to the rescue of Linda, and he expected that the fortune of war would turn in his favor.

He judged that as Jack had a rifle it would be necessary for himself and the young sailor, unarmed as they were, to chip in.

At any rate neither of the concealed boys made a move to discover themselves.

The sudden and unexpected overthrow of Jack took Tom's breath away.

He would have made an effort to save his friend, but the big odds against the success of any move he and Bill might make deterred him.

Antoine now had the rifle in his possession, and the ugly way he acted showed he would stand no interference.

So Tom and Bill watched to see what would be done to Jack.

When he was bound and thrown into the hut, and the door was shut upon him, Tom chuckled.

"Just wait till those chaps go and we'll set him free in a jiffy," he said.

In a few minutes the clearing in front of the hut was deserted.

"You stay here and I'll attend to my friend below," Tom said to his companion.

He crawled back to the trap, removed his pack, and descended the ladder.

Hardly had he gone when Mons. Laroche, his blacks and the overseer, dashed into the clearing.

The Frenchman expected to find Jack here, for the lad had run on ahead; also Linda, whose scream he had heard, but there was no one in sight.

"We must go further on," he said to his overseer. "Forward!"

The blacks dashed ahead into the bushes, and he and the overseer were following, when there came the crack of a rifle and the planter fell wounded on the ground.

His cry of pain, and the report, halted the overseer, who turned and saw a puff of smoke floating up through the night air.

"Help me, Berthault," cried the planter. "I'm shot."

The overseer, much surprised, for he had no idea that Antoine and his comrades were armed with guns, went to his aid.

"Are you much hurt, monsieur?" he asked.

Ere his employer could reply, Antoine dashed out of the bushes, clubbed his weapon, and stretched the overseer senseless on the ground.

Then with a fiendish laugh he seized the helpless planter.

"At last I have you in my power," he gritted, putting his face close to the Frenchman's. "You know me—me, the despised Antoine. How I have dreamed of this hour! But I have no time to fool with you, for the rest of your party may be here at any moment, and I would not lose my revenge for all the gold in the world. Come, to your death—the death you brought to my bride—my Jenny."

He dragged the struggling planter to the very edge of the crevasse.

"Look down," cried Antoine, forcing his face down. "It was here she fell in seeking to escape from your hated attentions. Here she met her death through you—dog. Her spirit has called for vengeance since that fateful day. She has come to me in my dreams and urged me to revenge the wrong. I swore that I would do it—that you should die as she died in the same place. And now your time has come. Her bones have never been found. They lie some-

where in the jagged depths of this crevasse. You shall find them. You shall lie with them till the judgment, while your scoundrelly soul shall roast in perdition. Ah, your struggles will not help you. I have you clutched in a grip of steel. You are at my mercy. You had no mercy on her, and you shall have none from me, you dog of a Frenchman! Antoine, whom you have treated as though he were your slave, is now your master—your master, do you understand?"

He shook the planter savagely.

Linda, the bride you expected to possess, will be now my bride. She is in my hands and I shall carry her far from this island to console me for the bride you robbed me of," Antoine went on. "How does that grate on your soul? This is my hour of triumph. Look down and see the death that is beckoning to you. Ha, ha, ha! You tremble, dog. Fright at your fate has struck you dumb."

At this juncture, Jack, released by Tom from his bonds, rushed out of the hut, followed by his friend, and looked around.

The moonlight showed him the figure of Mons. Laroche struggling in the grasp of the avenger upon the edge of the fearful crevasse.

He understood the situation at once, for he had not forgotten Antoine's threat against the planter.

While he had no great love for his employer, who had proved himself a human brute in many ways, he did not propose to see him sacrificed if he could prevent it.

Snatching up Laroche's rifle he covered the Creole with it.

"Stop, Antoine!" he cried. "You shall not murder Monsieur Laroche."

"Ha, you have got free!" exclaimed the Creole, glaring down at him.

"Yes, and I hold your life in my hands. I do not wish to harm you, Antoine, but you must release the monsieur."

"Release him!" laughed Antoine, wickedly. "I'll release him."

He lifted the wounded man in his arms as if he were a child and held him over the edge of the crevasse.

"Hold, or I'll fire," cried Jack.

"Fire, then, and we'll both go down together. You can't save him, Mars' Jack. He dies as surely as the moon shines yonder. He dies if I have to die with him."

Antoine evidently meant what he said.

He was willing to sacrifice even his own life to get revenge on the unfortunate planter.

Jack, comprehending the situation, paused, with his finger on the trigger, in an irresolute way.

"Ah, you fear to fire, Mars' Jack," laughed the Creole, tauntingly.

"For Heaven's sake, don't sacrifice the man—remember it would be murder," replied the boy.

"And is he not guilty of murder, too? Did he not drive my Jennie to her death down here?" hissed Antoine.

"He did not do it intentionally. You told me yourself that her foot slipped and she fell."

"Yes, but he was the cause of it. She was flying from him. Had he not followed her here to her mother's hut she would still be alive and we would have been happy in each other's love. Ah, the memory drives me frantic!"

At that moment the other party of overseers and blacks came rushing up.

Antoine saw them and knew that not another moment was to be lost.

With a fearful cry he tossed the helpless planter from him into the crevasse, and then, quick as a flash, he turned and plunged into the bushes, followed by the bullets from three rifles.

CHAPTER V.

THE GORGE AND THE WATERFALL.

After discharging his rifle, Jack rushed to the edge of the crevasse, and heard the sound of the planter's body rebounding in dull thuds from rock to rock in its descent into the depths.

That he was already dead there could be little doubt, and Antoine, despite his wrongs, was a murderer.

"He's a goner," said Tom, coming up. "His was an awful death. That scoundrel must have been down on him like a car-load of pig iron."

"He was," said Jack.

The two overseers and the second bunch of blacks had started in chase of the Creole.

They could be heard tearing through the bushes yards ahead.

Antoine, however, knew the range much better than they did, and easily eluded them.

He hid till they had passed him, and then, by a route with which he was familiar, he started to rejoin his comrades in the snug retreat to which they had retired with their fair prisoner.

Jack, intensely anxious to save Linda, determined to follow the path taken by the blacks who carried her off at Antoine's orders.

It was Tom who told him the direction they had taken, for he and Bill had watched them depart with the girl.

Before making a start with Tom and Bill, who agreed to go with him, he devoted his attention to the senseless overseer, and the boys succeeded in reviving the man.

He declared, however, that he felt in no condition to take any further part in the pursuit at present.

Bill took his rifle, Tom took the planter's gun, and Jack recovered his own, abandoned by Antoine after striking down the overseer, and thus armed the boys took up the pursuit of the blacks who had Miss Vernon in charge.

Several hours passed away.

The round, full tropical moon, sinking in the western sky, shone into a small gorge in the mountain range, apparently inaccessible except by a narrow path which led up through a mass of tangled brush and boulders.

At the back of the gorge was a rushing waterfall which fell, like a bridal veil, a full hundred feet without interruption, and then formed a boiling, rushing torrent that went its sinuous way to the river below.

Behind this watery fall, on a level with the gorge, the rock sloped inward in the form of a cleft, forming a narrow path or outlet from the gorge in the rear.

Antoine alone knew of this secret retreat, and because of it he knew that he could not be cornered in the gorge by his enemies if they came upon him there.

One of the blacks was on watch in the path many yards away, the others were sleeping in the shadow of the rocks.

Miss Vernon, exhausted by the strain she had undergone, was also slumbering restlessly near the waterfall.

Standing in the moonshine by her side was Antoine, his tumultuous soul ignoring sleep and fatigue.

"Sleep on, beauty!" he muttered. "You are mine—mine in spite of all mankind, and your own aversion. With the setting of the moon I shall awaken you to the realization of your position once more, for I can delay our departure no longer. Before the sun rises we must be on the river, with our faces toward the sea. Ere morning is well under way we shall leave Hayti behind forever. Water leaves no tracks, and so your friends will never be able to trace us to our temporary destination—Island Number Ten, where lies the sunken gold ship, the secret of which I mean to penetrate. When I have found the gold we will sail away to some far tropical land where you shall become the bride of the now despised Antoine."

He cackled softly, as if the prospect ahead pleased him.

After that not a sound escaped him, nor did he make a move till the moon hid her face behind a long, low ridge that marked the distant confines of the valley beyond the range.

Then he aroused himself, and catching Linda by the arm shook her gently.

"Awake, miss. Rouse yourself," he said, in as soft a tone as he could assume.

Linda started up and looked around her in a dazed way.

"The sky—the trees! Am I dreaming still?"

Then her eyes rested on the Creole.

"No, no; it is the horrid reality," she cried, shrinking away from him.

"I see that sleep has not softened your feelings toward me," he said, regarding her intently.

"Nothing will ever soften me towards you now," she replied, coldly.

"We will see," he answered, grimly. "Hours have passed and my pursuers are doubtless miles away on the wrong scent. At any rate they have failed to rescue you when the chance was theirs, now you can entertain no further hope."

"You fancy yourself secure, but we are not off the island yet. Monsieur Laroche——"

"Don't mention his name!" hissed Antoine, vehemently, with a dark look.

"You are not master of my tongue if you are at present of my liberty. I say Monsieur Laroche will leave not a stone unturned to track you down and bring you to justice."

Antoine gave a wicked laugh that caused the girl to shudder.

"If your hope rests on Monsieur Laroche, then it is as unstable as the shifting sand of the seashore," he said, malevolently. "Monsieur Laroche is roasting in perdition at this moment."

"What do you mean?" she cried, fearfully.

"I mean he is dead—as dead as this stone. I have kept

my oath, as I told you I would. He is lying, a mass of broken bone and torn flesh, in the depths of the crevasse. He is gone, blame him! and the world is well rid of him."

"You have murdered him!" she cried with a shudder.

"I have avenged my lost bride's death. Call it murder if you wish—I call it vengeance. And it's a just one. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth—let the punishment fit the crime. At any rate he has got his deserts. Let us forget him."

"If you have indeed killed him your own punishment will follow," she cried, looking at him with horror.

"We are wasting time. The moon has set and we must leave here for the river."

"The river!" she said, with a sinking of the heart.

"Yes. There I have a boat to take you away in."

"I will not go."

"Yes, you will. You will go where I go. By noon we will be far beyond pursuit."

"Heaven have pity on me. I realize that I am in your power. Why will you not have mercy on me and release me? Let me depart alone and I swear not to betray you, much as I loathe you for the crime you confess you have committed."

"It is too late. I have learned to care for you since I carried you off, and now fate shall make you my bride."

"Rather will I be the bride of death than yours."

Antoine laughed.

"Come. It is time to go."

"No, no," she cried, shrinking back.

At that moment the black who had been on guard rushed into the gorge.

"Three boys with rifles are coming up the path," he cried.

"Who are they?"

"One is Mars' Jack."

"Jack!" screamed Linda, with hope in her eyes. "He will save me. He is the bravest boy in the world."

"He saved you once, but lightning strikes not twice in the same place. Come, we have already lost too much time."

He seized her by the arm.

With a scream that awoke the echoes of the mountain she broke away and ran toward the path.

"Stop her!" cried Antoine to the blacks who had sprung to their feet.

She was captured and carried screaming back to the Creole, who grabbed her in his arms and started toward the end of the waterfall, where a single log spanned a narrow chasm that intervened between the cataract and the gorge.

"Be quiet, Miss Linda," said Antoine as he stepped on the log. "If you continue your struggles we will fall on the rocks below."

He started to cross the perilous footway just as Jack, Tom and Bill rushed on the scene, attracted by Linda's recent screams.

They saw Antoine, with the girl in his arms, outlined against the white water.

With rifles cocked they dashed after him, paying no attention to the blacks who were intimidated by the weapons, and did not attempt to stay their passage.

"Help, Jack!" screamed Linda, when she saw the brave young American.

"Come back, you scoundrel!" cried the boy, aiming his rifle at him.

Antoine paused with his foot close to the waterfall.

He knew that Jack could easily put a ball into him at that short range, but he also knew that the boy would not fire.

Linda's safety depended on his own.

He knew that and Jack soon recognized it.

"Well, Mars' Jack," he said, tauntingly, "what are you going to do?"

"Come back and hand over Miss Vernon," said the boy.

"You are risking her life as well as your own in that spot. You know you cannot escape. There is but a foot of rock between you and the waterfall."

"You should say there is but a foot between me and safety," laughed the Creole, banteringly.

"Safety! Are you mad?"

"Do I look it, Mars' Jack?" chuckled Antoine.

"Come back, for Heaven's sake, man! If that log should slip from its place it would mean the death of you both."

"You are wrong," replied the Creole, calmly. "See."

He stepped wholly on the rocky ledge, and then with a movement of one foot sent the log thundering down into the chasm.

"My Heaven, you are lost!" cried Jack, aghast, his blood turning cold at Linda's position.

"Wrong again," laughed Antoine. "I have simply prevented you and your companions from following me. Good-by, Mars' Jack. Never more will you gaze on Miss Linda. She is mine—mine."

With another laugh that bore a triumphant ring Antoine and his fair burden suddenly disappeared behind the waterfall and were gone, leaving Jack and his two friends gazing in blank amazement at the vacant spot occupied by them the moment before.

CHAPTER VI.

ANTOINE'S TRACK.

"Great Scott!" cried Jack, "where have they gone?"

"Gosh! They must have been carried down by the waterfall," said Tom.

"No, they seemed to vanish behind it. There must be a hole in the rock that the Creole is acquainted with. He spoke as confidently as if he was sure of making his escape. He wouldn't have been such a fool as to kick the log away if he felt it would cut him off from safety," said Jack.

"That's right, my hearty," said Bill. "That nigger is as sharp as our cook's carving-knife, dash my binnacle, if he isn't."

"If there is a hole in the rock that admits of his escape we ought to try and find a way of crossing this chasm and reaching it, too, so that we can follow him and rescue Miss Vernon," said Jack.

"I don't see how we can cross as things stand," said Tom.

"Perhaps we can find another log."

"It isn't every log that would answer," said Tom. "The one he kicked down was flattened at the ends so it would rest squarely on the rock on both sides. A common log wouldn't do. It would be likely to turn under us and drop us on to the rocks a hundred feet below."

Jack had to admit that his friend was right, still he was on pins and needles over the trouble that the girl he thought so much of was in.

Something ought to be done to save her, and done quickly, too.

He felt that every moment of delay rendered her rescue the more difficult.

"Let us look for a log of some kind anyway," he said.

They started back into the gorge to find that the blacks had disappeared.

That was a matter of no consequence to Jack, as he wasn't interested in them.

After some hunting they found a tree trunk that was long enough to span the chasm easily.

It was encumbered with small limbs at one end that Jack thought would hold it steady and prevent it from turning over.

After considerable difficulty they landed it across the chasm.

After testing it as best he could, Jack ventured to trust himself on it.

He landed safely on the other side.

Tom immediately followed him, when Jack announced that there was a passage under the waterfall.

Bill came over at last, and then with Jack in advance they made their way along a wide ledge that offered them secure footing, with the falling sheet of water between them and the chasm.

The waterfall curved to the left and the cleft ledge followed it, finally passing out beyond the cataract, and connecting with a rough path that descended the mountain with an easy grade.

Jack pushed ahead as rapidly as he could.

He believed that burdened as Antoine was with the girl, who would certainly not go willingly with him, that they would ere long overtake the pair.

Jack was so far right that had he been acquainted with the range he and his companions would have overtaken the Creole and his prisoner before they reached the river, because Antoine was not expecting pursuit, now that he had cut off the log bridge across the chasm.

Jack, however, got mixed up in his course down the mountain, and led his friends off the right scent.

The result was that the sun rose and found them still unsuccessful in their quest.

At length they came in sight of the river.

Sailing along in mid-stream they saw a small sloop and recognized Antoine at the helm.

There was no possible way for them to reach the sloop, and chagrined at the Creole's success in outwitting them, Jack took aim at him and fired.

The crack of his rifle, and the whistle of the ball close to his head, was the first intimation Antoine had that a foe was at hand.

He looked in the direction the report had come from and saw the three boys on the river bank.

It was certainly a great surprise to him to see them there, but after all it did not matter.

He felt that they could not reach him except with a bullet, and he got down in the cockpit out of sight to avoid that contingency.

The boys followed the boat, hoping to get another shot at him, but they were disappointed, for he prudently avoided showing himself, being able to steer the boat in his awkward position owing to the fact that the wind was light.

"I'd like to know where he's bound," said Jack. "We are pretty sure to reach a plantation or a village along the river after awhile, and if we can secure a boat we will give him chase."

"If it hadn't been for them sandwiches you gave me I never could have come this far on an empty stomach," said Bill to Tom.

"Glad I had them, old man," replied Tom. "I guess the both of us could sail into a square meal about this time and feel better after it."

"Splinter my topping-lift! I could eat two square meals and then not have any too much cargo under hatches," replied Bill.

They kept the sloop in sight as long as they could, but a turn in the stream shut it out from their sight.

Jack kept them hustling along.

He did not feel the fatigue himself, although he had been up all night after putting in a hard day's work.

His companions not having the same interest in the chase as he felt, fagged out, and wondered how much further they would have to go before they would get a rest, with a meal to boot.

The sun was well up when they reached a big plantation.

Jack introduced himself to the planter, and reported what had happened on the Laroche property, together with the murder of the Frenchman.

The planter, of course, sympathized with the Laroche interests, and said he would notify the authorities.

When he heard that Antoine was sailing down the river in a small sloop, he said that he was doubtless aiming for the ocean, fifteen miles away.

"We'll cut him off," he said. "He has to pass Port de Paix before he can get clear of the island. We can reach the town by the road some time before he will be able to get there by water, for the wind is light. I will order a vehicle, and in the meantime you and your friends must have breakfast."

A meal was hastily prepared for the boys, and after a wash they sat down to it with good appetites.

After they had eaten all they wanted they got into the carriage with the planter and started off at a smart pace for the town, which the boys learned was at the mouth of the river, and partly facing on a small bay.

It took two hours to cover the distance, and when they reached it they rushed down to the water front.

There were many craft on the river and on the bay, but Jack could not recognize any of them as the sloop they hoped to cut off.

While the planter went to notify the town authorities

and enlist their services, the boys remained at one of the wharves on the watch.

They finally learned that a sloop answering to the description of Antoine's boat had passed out of the river nearly an hour before and had headed east along the coast.

The planter's calculations had missed fire, much to Jack's chagrin.

"What shall we do now?" he said.

"Well, my hearty," said Bill, "the only thing I see to do is to hire a boat and follow them."

"That will cost money and I haven't a cent," said Jack.

"I'll loan you ten dollars," said Bill, "if that will do any good."

"And I'll let you have twenty," put in Tom. "We ought to be able to do something on thirty."

"We'll try. We can't wait for the planter to return, for every moment counts in this chase."

They started to look for a fast sloop that could be hired for a short cruise.

After some trouble they found a skipper who was willing to accommodate them at so much a day, including his services, the boys to furnish the grub.

As Jack did not expect the chase would be a long one, for the skipper claimed that his boat was a fast one in the light breeze then blowing, he did not consider it necessary to put any food aboard for themselves.

He paid one day's hire in advance, explaining the object of the trip to the owner of the craft, and inside of an hour from the time they parted with the planter they were sailing along the edge of the harbor in the direction taken by Antoine.

The boys now began to feel the need of rest and sleep, and as there was nothing for them to do they turned in on the bunks in the little not over sweet cabin, after Jack had directed the skipper to call them when he sighted a sloop answering the description of the craft they were after.

Hours passed, the wind freshened somewhat, and the vessel sped along the coast to the eastward.

Many small vessels passed the sloop going west, but the skipper overhauled no vessel bound in the same direction as he was going that tallied with Antoine's craft.

So the boys were allowed to sleep on undisturbed, and it was late in the afternoon when Jack awoke and poked his head out of the cabin door.

"How long have I been asleep?" he asked the skipper, judging that it had been some time.

"About six hours," was the reply.

"Six hours! And haven't you seen anything of the sloop we are chasing?"

"Not a thing."

The boy was greatly disappointed.

He went forward to the bow and took a good look ahead, but there wasn't a small vessel in sight in that direction.

He returned to the cockpit.

"You are sure that you've kept a sharp lookout?"

"Positive," replied the man.

"Seems to me if your vessel is as fast as you claim we ought to have overhauled the boat. She did not seem to be a fast sailer."

"She may have put in at some place along the coast," said the skipper.

"I doubt it, for the rascal aboard of her would not take any chances, I am sure."

"Then she must be ahead of us still."

"Are you making your best speed?"

"In this wind, yes."

"We have only about three hours daylight left," said Jack. "If we don't catch her before sunset, the fellow stands a good chance of getting away altogether."

"Oh, no; it will be a bright night."

"I didn't expect the chase would last this long," said Jack. "As it may be an all-night one, and extend into tomorrow, we'll have to put in somewhere for provisions."

"I can put in at Limbo."

"Where is that?"

"A few miles further on. About two hours' sail."

"Well, you'd better. We'll lose as little time as we can. What big island is that yonder," pointing behind to the northwest.

"Tortuga, or Turtle Island."

"Maybe the sloop sailed over there?" said Jack.

The skipper shrugged his shoulders, as much as to say that it was quite possible she had.

"If she did then we are running away from her," said the boy.

Jack looked long and earnestly at the island.

It struck him as a likely place for Antoine to go to avoid immediate capture.

He felt that he was on the horns of a dilemma.

The longer he considered the matter the stronger his impression grew that they were on the wrong course.

He would have ordered the skipper to come around and head for Tortuga, but that it was necessary he and his companions should secure provisions.

He kicked himself now for not getting eatables at the town they started from.

However, there was no help for it—they must proceed as far as Limbo before making any change in their plans.

If within the next couple of hours they failed to sight Antoine's sloop, Jack felt that the right thing for them to do was to head back for Tortuga, and skirt that island, keeping a sharp look along the shore as best they could under a tropical night sky.

He mentioned his purpose to the skipper, and that individual said he was ready to follow any directions he received.

He said that if they were going to sail all night he would like one of his passengers to relieve him for awhile at the wheel so that he could get a few winks of sleep.

Jack said that he and Bill Poole would look after the sloop while he took a rest.

Tom and Bill presently came into the cockpit, and were surprised to find that it was so late, and that they had not yet overhauled Antoine's craft.

They were pleased to learn that the boat was to put in at the next town for provisions, as they were both quite hungry.

It was near sunset when they ran up to a wharf at Limbo and made fast.

They did not have to go far, as there were stores of all kinds along the water front.

They purchased a good supply of eatables, not knowing how long the cruise was likely to last, and carried the stuff in bags aboard the sloop.

The skipper was then directed to head back for Tortuga.

CHAPTER VII.

A LONG CHASE.

Evening was well advanced when the sloop with the boys aboard drew in close to the shore of Tortuga Island.

The island is long and narrow, being about twenty-five miles from east to west, and at one point lies within two miles of Hayti, while its western end is perhaps six miles distant.

If Jack intended to circumnavigate the island, on the chance of overhauling the craft he was after, he had quite a sail before him, unless luck played in his favor.

The moon was already up in unclouded brilliancy, and its light was a great help to the boys as they drew in to the island.

The skipper had gone into the cabin to take a short snooze and Bill Poole was in charge of the rudder.

"We may venture in quite close in this small craft," said Jack. "We must watch sharp for any creek or other indentation where a craft like Antoine's is likely to run in."

"Well, my hearty, shall we run along the north shore or the south shore?" asked Bill.

"The north shore," replied Jack, "for it is likely Antoine would get as far from Hayti as possible."

So Bill headed as directed and the sloop was soon under the lee of the big island.

They sailed along for two hours without seeing any vessel, or discovering an inlet of any kind.

The shore was bold and rocky, rising out of the water with scarcely a single patch of beach.

Suddenly they opened a little bay or roadstead, on the shore of which was a small collection of houses, such as would be called a village.

There were two or three little wharves at which boats were moored, and there were also a couple of sloops anchored close in.

"We must inspect these craft," said Jack, as he viewed the scene before them.

"They look to be deserted," said Tom. "If there are any persons aboard they are in the cabins."

They sailed up alongside the first sloop, which bore a certain resemblance to Antoine's, and Jack stepped on board.

The cabin door was locked, which was a sign that no one was aboard of her.

Still, if this happened to be the Creole's craft, it was pretty certain he would lock Linda in the cabin while he was away.

Jack pounded on the door, called Linda's name, and said he was Jack, but he received no response.

He listened, but heard not the slightest sound inside to show that any one was there.

"I guess this is not Antoine's sloop," he said, stepping back into his own vessel. "We'll go on to the next one."

A man, whom they could not see till they got alongside, was sitting down in the cockpit smoking.

He looked up when the boys in their craft glided up.

"What you want?" he asked, in the Haytien lingo.

Jack didn't know enough of the language to carry on a conversation with him, so the skipper was called to act as interpreter.

In answer to questions, he said that he had been at anchor there the greater part of the day, and that early in the afternoon he had seen a sloop similar to his own, with a creole at the helm, pass by, headed to the west.

"That must have been Antoine," said Jack, in some excitement.

The man said he paid no particular attention to the sloop and that it disappeared around the point beyond.

Jack thanked him for the information and the sloop was put on her way again, the skipper returning to his bunk.

They rounded the point and followed the curve of the shore.

They reeled off several miles without any developments.

"We are undoubtedly on the right track now," said Jack, "and we ought to come up with our quarry if the rascal has put in at some quiet nook."

"We'll find them," replied Tom, confidently. "That Creole maybe intends to lie low somewhere along here till he thinks it will be safe to sail for Cuba, which I'll bet is his destination. The eastern end of that island is only about a hundred miles from here, and it can easily be made in the sloop with a fair wind."

"Now that you mention Cuba, and its closeness, which I did not think about, it is not at all certain that he'll stop at this island. What is to prevent him from going straight on without any delay? The further he gets from Hayti the less chance he will fear of being captured," said Jack.

"That's true, too," admitted Tom, "but if he intended to sail right for Cuba, why should he come around this way? He would have saved many hours' time by steering for it direct after he left the river."

"Perhaps he came this way for a blind, figuring that more than one person might have seen his sloop come out of the river, and that an investigation by the authorities would result in putting a pursuing vessel on his trail. By sailing part way around the island he probably thought he would mix things up."

"He hasn't mixed us up much, after all," said Tom.

"By failing to get on his trail until an hour ago we have lost a good many hours and given him the advantage of a fine start."

"That can't be helped. We did the best we could, and there is no use of crying over spilled milk now. All I'm worrying about is the fate of my pack, which I left behind in that deserted house. Some wandering blackie is liable to discover it there and he won't do a thing to it."

"As you abandoned it in the cause of justice, I daresay you will be remunerated by the authorities or by the heirs of Vincent Laroche."

"Who are his heirs?"

"I couldn't tell you. Linda Vernon might be in a way for all I know to the contrary."

"If she were a relative of his the planter wouldn't have thought of marrying her, I should think," said Tom.

"She might be a cousin, or a distant relative of some kind. At any rate, he was her guardian," said Jack.

"Do you think she really intended marrying him?"

"I suppose so, for Antoine told me they were to be united in a few weeks."

"How could he know?"

"I believe he got his information from her maid, Susanne, with whom he was pretty thick."

"He may have been right, then, for these maids seems to know all the business of their mistresses."

"Whether he was right or not, she'll not marry him now."

"I should say not. From my opinion of him I'll bet he's gone to a warmer climate than the tropics," grinned Tom, who had little sympathy for the planter's fate.

Midnight found them approaching the western end of the island without having made any discoveries.

"He's gone on to Cuba," said Tom.

"Or some other place," said Jack.

"What other place do you think he's heading for? I should say that Cuba was the place of all others for him to lose himself in with the girl."

"There's a big island northwest of here, and just as close as Cuba, called Great Inagua. He might have laid his course for there," said Jack.

"I don't know anything about the island, so I couldn't say what inducement there would be to take him there. One thing is certain, we can't go to both Cuba and that island at the same time. If he's gone to Great Inagua we shall take the wrong scent by steering for Cuba; but of the two, I'll gamble on it that Cuba is his destination."

"I'm rather doubtful about that," said Jack. "It seems to me that Cuba is a bad place for him to carry Miss Vernon to. He would surely have a lot of trouble preventing her from making her escape, and the moment she managed to do it she would have him arrested, and then it would be all day with him. It strikes me that he would take her to a less populated place than Cuba."

"Then I suppose you intend to sail for Great Inagua?"

"I haven't decided just what is best to be done."

"You want to do it mighty quick, for we're at the end of the island."

Just then the boys made out a large bark in the near distance.

She was coming from the direction of Great Inagua Island.

"We'll hail her," said Jack. "Maybe the people aboard have seen Antoine's craft if she sailed in that direction."

"Good idea," said Tom.

To save time, they headed for the bark and signaled her that they wanted to hold communication with her.

The vessel was thrown up into the wind and Bill ran the sloop alongside.

"Hello!" cried the mate of the bark. "What do you want?"

"Did you pass a sloop about the size of this one, bound for Great Inagua?" asked Jack.

"We passed such a sloop about four hours ago, but we

held no communication with her, and I couldn't say where she was bound. However, she was headed in the direction of the island."

"Did you notice if there was a young lady aboard of her?"

"The only person I saw aboard was a dark-skinned man at the helm. He looked something like a negro."

Jack had obtained the information he wanted.

The person in question was without doubt Antoine, and it seemed pretty certain that he was bound for Great Inagua.

Securing the right course for the island, Jack thanked the mate of the bark and the two craft parted company.

"Lay your course west nor'west, Poole," he said to the young mariner.

"Aye! aye! my hearty!" replied Bill, putting the sloop on her new course.

"And now I guess two of us had better turn in, for we're in for a long sail," said Jack. "As Poole has been steering these four hours it is time he had a rest. You're not much of a sailor, Tom, so that let's you out. I'll take the wheel till the skipper relieves me, and you two turn in."

Five minutes later Jack was alone in the cockpit.

Behind the island of Tortuga lay like a long dark blot against the sky.

Ahead and around lay the vast Atlantic, glistening in the rays of the descending moon.

The only sail in sight was the bark they had just parted from, headed for the northwest passage, which lay between Cuba and Hayti.

An hour later, bark and island were out of sight and the little sloop seemed to be the only object in the great watery solitude.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE STORM—OVERBOARD.

Jack remained at the helm till he thought it was time for the skipper to take charge again, when he tied the rudder, went into the cabin and aroused him.

"We are bound for Great Inagua," he said.

The skipper seemed surprised.

He looked around when he stepped out into the cockpit and asked how long since they had left Tortuga Island.

"We left the western end of it about three hours ago," replied Jack.

"Three hours!" he said, taking note of the wind. "Then we must have covered about twenty-five miles. We shall reach Great Inagua by noon to-morrow, or rather to-day, for it's about three in the morning now. I'm to keep her to the course she is on, eh?" and he looked at the compass in the little binnacle.

"Yes," said Jack. "I'm going to turn in now."

The skipper nodded and Jack entered the cabin.

Five hours later the boys were eating their breakfast in the cabin.

A brig and two schooners were in sight, but not close enough for them to be spoken.

Later on they made out another schooner, headed toward them.

The sloop was run close to her and Jack made inquiries concerning the craft they were after, but the captain of the schooner had not seen such a vessel.

When they reached Great Inagua they put in at the first port on the island, but Antoine and his sloop had not been there.

They sailed all around the island, watching the shore and making inquiries at each place that had inhabitants, but not a trace did they get of the sloop.

Finally they got back to the point where they started.

It was the third day of the pursuit, and they were now completely at sea.

"Although we have evidence that Antoine was bound in this direction it seems certain that he never came to this island," said Jack.

"He must have changed his mind and gone to some smaller island—there are loads of islands to the north and west for him to make a selection," said Tom.

"You mean the Bahamas? Yes, it would be like hunting for a needle in a haystack to follow him up in that group, which stretches out for about nine hundred miles."

"What are you going to do, then? Give up the chase?"

"I don't want to do it, but the skipper demands his pay every day and I'm nearly cleaned out of money—the cash you two chaps advanced me—so I don't believe we can go on any further. It's a shame to abandon Miss Vernon to that rascally creole."

"I don't see how you can do anything more," said Tom. "Even if we were not paying a cent for this boat where can we look for the creole now, with not a single clew to guide us?"

Jack had to confess that the chance of overhauling Antoine was hardly one in a hundred.

Reluctantly, he told the skipper to head back for the Haitian town they left to go on the cruise.

A few hours later the weather took on a change.

A haze obscured the horizon and dimmed the face of the sun.

The wind came on stronger every moment, and before long half a gale was tearing the whitecaps from the surface of the agitated ocean.

The skipper regarded the weather with considerable uneasiness.

He remarked that he was afraid a hurricane was brewing.

If it came on them they might find some difficulty in riding it out.

That wasn't pleasant news for the three boys, who knew that a West Indian hurricane was no silly thing to encounter under the most favorable conditions.

The skipper said that the most prudent thing they could do was to put back to Great Inagua and seek shelter in the nearest harborage.

Jack agreed with him, and accordingly the sloop came about and headed north.

The weather continued to grow worse as time passed.

The wind came so heavy that not only was the jib taken in but the mainsail was reefed as close as possible.

The sloop flew like a frightened sea bird before the gale.

She took in considerable water so that one of the boys was kept bailing out the cockpit all the time.

By this time the sun had disappeared entirely, though it was mid-day.

The dark clouds that obscured the sky grew darker and more threatening every moment.

"I'm afraid this is our finish," said Tom, when Jack, dripping like a dog just out of the water, joined him in the cabin.

"I hope not," replied Jack, "though the gale seems to be getting worse. The sloop rides the sea in fine shape, and appears to be quite stanch."

"But we're liable to be swamped. If one of those big waves lights on us it will be all day with this craft."

"The waves behind won't catch us," replied Jack.

"Why not?"

"Because we're always on a big wave ourselves, which carries us just out of reach of the following one. The sea moves with a certain regularity, even in the worst storms, otherwise it would go hard with the strongest ship ever built."

"You're something of a sailor and ought to know, I suppose, but I don't feel at all easy in my mind as to the outcome," said Tom.

"Oh, we'll come out all right," replied Jack, more cheerfully than he felt.

"I don't like being cooped up in this cabin. If we should go down I would be caught like a rat in a trap."

"If the sloop should go down we'd be lost anyway, either in this cabin or outside."

"If I've got to drown I'd sooner do it in the open, under the sky."

"What's the difference—it would be death in either case."

"I know it, but it seems more terrible. It's just the same with a railroad accident on land. It's a hundred times more horrible to have a smash-up happen in a tunnel than anywhere else along the line."

"Well, keep your courage up. It won't do you any good to grow nervous. You can't escape from your position."

The boys carried on this conversation under great difficulty, clinging to a bunk for dear life to avoid being thrown around the cabin by the pitch and roll of the little craft, which was acting very much like a skittish colt in a field.

The skipper outside would trust no one but himself at the rudder.

Their only salvation lay in keeping straight before the wind, which carried the sloop with it.

There was no danger of encountering any rocks for many miles ahead, but, of course, there was the possibility—a hundred to one shot—of running into some other craft that might happen in their course.

The skipper kept as good lookout ahead as he could and did not anticipate such an accident.

The wind was not carrying them toward Great Inagua island, but away from it toward the northeast.

The big island was not more than twenty miles away, but the course they were following gave them a clear sea room for more than a hundred miles.

The skipper, however, did not dare shape his course for Great Inagua, the position of which he was able to determine by the compass before him.

It would have been sheer madness to spread any sail in

(Continued on page 20.)

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GOOD STORIES.

Mrs. John T. Schermerhorn of Milwaukee startled a dentist at La Crosse by exhibiting a set of front teeth she had cut from a common beef bone. They are perfectly formed and were made during spare moments to fill a space made vacant by the loss of her natural ones and to satisfy the woman's whim to do something novel. They were made with a common knife and a file while sitting in front of a mirror in her little workshop.

Two young ladies on St. Paul street, Baltimore, Mo., went to the theatre the other evening and their father, thinking they had a latchkey, went to bed at his usual hour, and the servants all left. When the ladies returned they rang the bell repeatedly and beat on the door, but got no answer. Finally they began to despair, when a neighbor, who had been awakened by the din appeared in white at his window opposite and asked what was the matter. "We are locked out and cannot awake papa," came the reply in duet. "Wait a minute," said the quick-witted man on the other side of the street; "your father has a telephone in his room and I will call him up. So the central was called. "Give me number—," said the neighbor. As soon as the bell sounded in the room of the sleeping father he awoke with a start and ran to the telephone. "Hello, what is the matter." "Is that you, so and so." "Yes, what is wanted?" "Your daughters are at the front door trying to get in. Open the door. Good night."

"The Malagasy natives have a superstitious veneration for crocodiles, and seldom kill them, although I had no trouble in inducing my little household to help me when I wanted to hunt them," writes a correspondent from Madagascar. "The crocodiles positively infest the island. They can only travel very slowly on land, but they go with incredible swiftness through the water. The motion is between a swim and a run, for the crocodile keeps on the bottom. They have a powerful tail, and the water behind them fairly boils. One reason the natives do not kill the crocodiles is because they are absolutely useless. The stench from a live crocodile is terrible, that from a dead one infinitely worse. Crocodile hunting is peculiar, and I found it exciting. The natives take two pieces of wood a foot long, sharpening the ends like stakes, and make a cross of them, fastened securely with small wire. To this a good, strong rope is attached, the other end of which is made fast to a tree on the shore. The cross is baited with fifteen or twenty pounds of beef, and thrown out to the length of the rope. The crocodile takes it with a gulp, and, after the first jerk

on the rope, it is unfastened from the tree, and everybody pulls. I had eighteen Malagasy boys on one occasion, and it was more exciting than a tug of war. The crocodile jerked all of them flat on the ground, and he dragged them down to the water's edge. By a desperate effort they succeeded in getting the rope up to the tree again, where it was fastened, and the crocodile was allowed to exhaust himself, which took several hours. At last we hauled him out, killed him with a spear, and found that he had never swallowed the cross and beef at all, but held it firmly gripped in his jaws. He was too stupid to know enough to release himself, and too obstinate to let it go—traits of the crocodile character."

JOKES AND JESTS.

A Literary Woman—"Is Mrs. Brown a literary woman?" "Decidedly. She makes most beautiful penwipers."

Sensible to the last, the dying cobbler folded his hands and murmured: "It's awl up! I'm pegging out!"

How He Measured Him—"Isn't your boy very tall for his age?" "Isn't he! You just ought to try to get him into a place on a half-fare ticket."

Young Housewife—"Can't you make that serial story in your journal go on a little longer? Our cook is reading it, and I think she will stay as long as it continues."

Lady Customer—"Are you sure this is real Ceylon tea? Well-informed Young Salesman—"Certainly, madam. Mr. Ceylon's name is on every package."

Briggs—"My doctor has ordered me to eat as little as possible for a week. Griggs—"Is that so? Come around to my boardinghouse and take Thanksgiving dinner with me."

Mrs. Casey—"Who was it hit ye? Casey—"Shure, I dunno. "I was in the crowd. Mrs. Casey—"Praise the saints! Now ye won't be gettin' licked agin trying to lick the felly that hit ye."

Officer—"How is this, Murphy? The sergeant complains that you call him names. Private Murphy—"Plaze, surr, I never called him ony names at all. All I said was, "Sergeant," says I, "some of us ought to be in a menagerie."

Titt—"You'll take part in the football game, I suppose, Mr. Tatt? Tatt—"Very sorry, but I don't know anything about the game. "Why, I thought you had taken a full college course?" "So I have; but I went to college to study, merely."

"I am willing to release you on your own recognizance," said the judge. "How dat?" asked Mistah Miffles. "I'll let you go if you give bond for yourself—that is, if you will be responsible for your own appearance in court." "Jedge, I'd like to 'blige yo', but I'se 'feared o' de s'cu'ty."

Paintings were not her specialty, but as she gazed at a beautiful copy of Millet's "Gleaners," her admiration of the work called forth enthusiastic comment. "What a wonderful picture!" she exclaimed. "And how natural it looks!" But what are these people doing?" she inquired, as she bent nearer to read the title. "Oh, yes, I see, gleanings of millet! How perfectly fascinating!"

Dion Calbert's Adventure

By D. W. Stevens

"Senor, you must be careful."

"Ha, ha, Alberto, my good fellow, you are not afraid of harm coming of this little bit of sport?"

The man called Alberto, a shrewd, dark-skinned Mexican, shrugged his shoulders, shook his head gravely and said:

"You Americans are always ready to take risks."

"Yes, Alberto, and take care of ourselves into the bargain," answered the American, a fearless, handsome fellow, of about twenty-two years of age.

"But you are so rash."

"Rash, Alberto? How?"

Alberto merely shook his head gravely, crossed himself and muttered some unintelligible sentences.

"I cannot see that there is anything rash, Alberto, in meeting a young lady on the plaza of an evening."

"But meeting her clandestinely——"

"Ha, ha, ha! that's the more romantic, my dear Alberto."

"Senor knows but little of Mexico or Mexicans."

"Well, Alberto, in all countries clandestine meetings are common between lovers," answered the young American, whose name was Dion Calbert. There was a twinkle of roguish fun in Dion's bright blue eye as he added: "You see all nationalities unite upon the one emotion of love. Now, if I come to the City of Mexico and fall in love with one of your fairest señoritas, who shall deny me the privilege of having a pleasant moonlight *tete-a-tete* on the plaza?"

The Mexican still shrugged his shoulders, and shaking his head more gravely, said:

"Senor don't know Mexicans. Mexican ladies can only meet gentlemen in the presence of their parents. If the señorita has consented to meet you alone on the plaza this evening, she has done very wrong, and her brothers or lover, if she has any, would be very furious if they knew of it."

"Well, Alberto, I am willing to take my chances. Have no fears on my account, for I tell you Americans are able to take care of themselves. Be ready to guide me from the city to-morrow to Pueblo; that's all I require of you."

The faithful guide bore the gentle rebuke without a murmur.

Dion Calbert, however, was so far impressed by the warning, that he went to his pack in one corner of the room and took therefrom an excellent silver-mounted six-shooter.

He concealed his revolver and sallied forth.

It was already dark, but a glorious Southern moon shed her soft refulgent rays upon the city, glistening from a hundred spires within sight of the great plaza.

He reached the great plaza, which presented a gay scene. The moon's rays were strengthened by thousands of colored lights.

Dion strode through the throng to a rustic seat beneath a large palmetto tree. There, reclining on the seat so graceful that one might take her for a queen, and so lovely that one might mistake her for an exquisite painting, was a dark-eyed señorita.

Her large, dark eyes drooped until the silken lashes rested on her cheeks, when she saw our American, and with lips inclined to pout she said:

"Si, senor, you are late."

"My darling Clodivia, I had much to do before coming to pay you my farewell visit."

"And will you go?"

"I must."

"And leave me?"

"I will soon return," cried the enraptured youth. "My dear Clodivia, I have come to say that I love you, and though we may be separated for a short time, it shall not be for long. I leave to-morrow."

"Where do you go, senor?"

"To Pueblo."

"By the old North road?"

"Yes, señorita."

"Is it not a long way?"

"True; but the West pass has grown dangerous, I am told."

"Dangerous! How, senor?"

"Dangerous from the band under that chief known as the Black Hand."

So I am informed by many of your people," returned Dion.

"I do not see why the Mexican government cannot rid itself of these desperadoes."

For a few moments they discussed the beauties of the night, the grand plaza, and the brilliant illumination.

Gradually the young American felt himself growing under the spell of the beautiful señorita. She was vivacious, and her large dark eyes sparkled like diamonds, and her small white teeth shone like pearls.

"Do you go alone to-morrow?" asked the señorita, at last.

"I have only my guide."

"I hope you will soon return."

"I will, my darling, and I shall come to claim you for my wife."

She was silent. He placed his arm about her waist and drew her toward him. The kiss he pressed upon her cold lips met with a feeble response from her, and the young American shuddered, he knew not why.

They arose and began to promenade the plaza. There were thousands of others out in the plaza enjoying the moonlight rays and the sparkling fountains.

They still conversed, and Dion seemed in a dream. He noticed a man always kept near them, and placing his hand on the butt of his pistol, he said:

"Who is that fellow?"

"Only a faithful servant, senor. One who always accompanies me wherever I go. It is not regarded right for a señorita to go out alone in Mexico."

Dion was satisfied. It was late when Dion parted from the beautiful Mexican. They were betrothed. In his heart he determined to remain true to her.

He was roused early next morning by Alberto, and found the pack mules and horses ready for the journey.

They passed through the city, out at the gates, and into the long North road from the city.

Our traveler and his guide were armed with revolvers, holster pistols, and daggers.

Traveling in Mexico is never the safest, though perhaps there are some States in America equally as bad.

The travelers were mounted on hardy mustang ponies, and drove two pack mules in front of them, carrying camp equipage, provisions and such curiosities as they chose to pick up by the way.

At noon they were out of sight of the city, having passed over the mountains and halted for dinner.

"You have been silent to-day, senor," said the guide.

"Have I, Alberto? I am a little moody."

"If I knew what makes you look so melancholy, I might help you bear your burden."

"No, no," Alberto, you cannot aid me. I will be better soon," said the American with a smile.

"Does senor expect to return to the city?"

Dion looked keenly into the face of his guide and said:

"Why, Alberto, what a question! I don't mind telling you."

I do. I am going back to make the most beautiful being I ever saw in my life my wife."

"Who, senor?"

"The Senorita Donna Clodivia Hondurado."

Then a long silence ensued, and Dion Calbert said:

"Alberto, did you ever see this robber, the Black Hand?"

"Yes, senor."

"When?"

"He has robbed many gentlemen whom I was guiding."

"Does he frequent this road?"

"No, senor, though he is here sometimes. If by any means he become apprised of our intentions to come this way we will be sure to meet him before to-morrow night."

They traveled until night, when they encamped in a valley, making a bed of their horse-blankets, and picketing their horses.

They built a campfire to keep away wild animals, and slept soundly until morning.

"What time will we reach the pass, Alberto?" the American asked.

"About ten o'clock," was the answer.

The horses and mules were soon saddled and the travelers under way.

In places the country was bare, with only a lonesome palmetto or cactus occasionally raising its head above the broken surface of the earth.

Then not far in the distance rose those lines of mountains extending far up toward the heavens.

The dark pass was in sight.

The guide halted.

"Why do you stop, Alberto?" our American asked.

"We always stop, Senor Calbert, to examine the pistols before venturing through a pass like this."

The revolvers and pistols were looked to, and the two started on.

The pass was reached, and although it was broad daylight, they were soon in a gray sort of a twilight.

Soon the guide cried:

"Look!"

Dion did look, and beheld a man's head peering over the rocks from the bluff on their left.

"We are going to have them now," cried the guide; "look out!"

He wheeled his mustang about, but the rocks and bushes on either side seemed alive with men. Two or three sprang into the pass before and two or three behind them.

"Crack!" went Dion's pistol, and with a yell one of the mountain robbers fell.

"Bang!" came three or four carbine shots in answer and bullets whistled past the ears of the travelers.

Alberto had already turned his horse about, and plunging his spurs into the animal's side, he galloped down upon the three bandits left to oppose him, a pistol in each hand.

"Bang!"

"Bang!" went the pistols of the guide, and one of the robbers fell wounded, and the horse struck another, knocking him down.

The third aimed a blow at the guide with his saber, which he dexterously dodged, and galloped away.

A lasso whizzed through the air and fell about the young American's shoulders. He struggled to keep his arms free, but in vain. The next moment he was jerked to the ground, pounced upon, and disarmed.

He was then bound, lifted to the saddle again, and the dead and wounded bandits put on the two pack-mules, which had been recaptured.

The pack-mules were driven some distance ahead, and they hurried through the pass.

Poor Dion was very much concerned as to what his fate would be. He had been captured by the Black Hand—of this he felt assured—and the Black Hand was known to be cruel. The brigands hurried along very rapidly, as if they feared pursuit.

That night Dion found himself a captive in a cavern.

A curtain was drawn aside, and not a brigand came forth, but the lovely Senorita Donna Clodivia Hondurado."

"You here?"

"Yes, senor, we have met."

"How came——"

"Oh, I came by a nearer way," she answered with a smile. She spoke excellent Spanish, which the youthful American understood very well.

"Are you, too, a prisoner?" asked the bewildered and astonished Dion.

"No, senor," she answered, smiling sweetly. At this moment a heavy tread was heard upon the stone floor of the cavern, and a tall, powerful, dark-bearded man, with a dark rich green velvet jacket and kneebreeches ornamented with gold lace and braid, entered.

"Senor Dion Calbert," said the senorita, rising, "this is Amilia Camilia, commonly known as the 'Black Hand'—my husband."

With a groan Dion sank down upon the rude stone divan and buried his face in his hands.

He understood all now. The beautiful senorita was the brigand's wife, and she had ascertained from him his route, that her bandit husband might waylay him.

All his valuables had been captured.

The guide had escaped, but the pack-mules had been captured.

Then what motive could Amilia Camilia have in retaining him but to put him to the most horrible torture? Looking the brigand in the face at last he said:

"You have all my money and valuables."

"Yes, senor," was the answer in triumphant tones of thunder, "and but very little did we get, compared to the job we undertook."

"It is not my fault that I am not rich, or that you undertook the job. Why am I held longer?"

"You are held for two reasons," said the bandit chief, a frown upon his dark brow. "For ransom, and for having shed the blood of one of our band."

Dion was silent.

"Your ransom," continued the Black Hand, "will have to be large to save you from death."

He was about to make some response, when the sharp report of a carbine rang on the air, and a wild shout went up from the front of the cavern.

Instantly wild confusion reigned.

The Black Hand drew his sword and flew toward the place where the air rang with shots and sounds of strife.

There were cries of victory. The Black Hand was borne into the cavern dying. His fair wife was kneeling at his side, wringing her hands with grief, when a random shot pierced her heart, and she fell dead on the body of her husband.

A party of soldiers burst into the cavern, headed by his faithful guide, Alberto.

"Oh, my master, my good master!" cried Alberto. "I found the soldiers and we followed the bandits to this cave. Are you hurt; oh, are you hurt? Tell me, good master."

Dion assured him he was uninjured.

The next day he resumed his journey with his faithful guide to Pueblo, made a wiser and better man by his singular adventure.

(Continued from page 16.)

that wind, which had compelled them to furl the mainsail altogether and drive ahead under bare poles, as the expression is.

So time passed and the storm grew steadily worse.

It was not a regular hurricane, but so far as appearances went there was little difference.

The boys didn't believe it could blow any harder.

Even Bill Poole, who had been through several heavy gales on board ship, looked solemn.

"If this craft wasn't so well trained, and as light as a cork, with a skipper at the helm who knows his business, I tell you, my hearties, I wouldn't give much for our lives," he said.

The boys satisfied their hunger with biscuits and cold meat, and Jack carried a bite to the skipper.

The bailing went on without intermission, Tom taking his turn with his comrades.

In this way the cockpit was kept fairly free of water.

"I'll remember this day as long as I live," said Tom, when Bill relieved him.

The young sailor grinned in a sickly way, for he was by no means confident that they wouldn't founder yet, as the storm showed no signs of abating.

At four o'clock the sky was almost as dark as night, and the wind was, if anything, howling worse than ever.

It was bad enough to meet such a tempest in a big ship, but in a little sloop it appeared to be infinitely worse.

When she sank into the trough of the sea, the waves rose like great watery walls all around her, apparently hovering for a moment in the air before engulfing the imperiled craft.

But just as they swooped down on her she rose up on a giant wave and escaped their fury.

Night came on, with Great Inagua bearing west about thirty miles away, though they had no idea of their position in that trackless waste.

The only fact the skipper was at all certain about was that they were driving northeast, a course that would eventually carry the sloop into the Caicos group of islands of the Bahamas.

There never was a blacker night on record.

This Tom was willing to swear to, and neither Jack nor Bill were disposed to dispute the point with him.

Nothing could be seen but the white spectral foam occasionally.

They seemed to be flying on a wild race through some vast tunnel of endless length, with Death spurring them on.

There was no intermission in the bailing, one of the boys being always at it.

He had to cling for dear life to a double line rigged to steady him.

It might have been about three o'clock when the wind suddenly changed.

As the sloop swung around a bit, a cross sea came aboard of her and sent Jack, who was bailing, sprawling in the bottom of the cockpit in a foot or two of water.

His first impression was that the sloop was going down, and he made a frantic clutch at the line and pulled himself up.

Then he shouted to Tom and Bill.

They were already at the cabin door, the former scared to death.

A second wave passed over the sloop almost flooding the cabin, but after that the little craft rode free of them.

Jack called on Bill to help him bail, and they worked like Trojans till they freed the cockpit of the extra water, Tom looking after the cabin.

Nothing more happened to startle them till morning broke, and the gale gave evidence of breaking up.

The sky was lighter than the afternoon before and they began to take courage.

The skipper was nearly dead with exhaustion, but he would not allow Bill to relieve him.

Two hours passed and then it was seen that the storm was not as bad as it had been for the last ten hours.

"We'll come out all right now, my hearties," said Bill, cheerfully.

At that moment the skipper noticed that the small boat, which was lashed fore and aft on top of the cabin, alongside of the skylight, had partly broken from its fastenings.

He called Jack's attention to it and asked him and Bill to put a fresh lashing to it.

The boys started to do it.

They had to get on the cabin roof to manage the job, with only the swaying boom, and half secured gaff, to hold on to with one hand.

Tom was asked to lend a hand to steady the boom as well as he could.

At that moment the wind veered around again, blowing from its original point.

The sloop fell into the trough of the sea and a tremendous wave made a clean sweep of her, tearing the exhausted skipper from the helm and carrying Jack and Bill overboard, together with the small boat.

The dipping of the sloop almost on her beam ends flung Tom into the sea also.

Throwing out his arms, despairingly, he caught hold of Jack and clung desperately to him.

That would have marked the finish of both only Jack had a grip on the gunwale of the boat.

Bill was also clinging to the boat, and there the three clung as the distance rapidly widened between them and the sinking sloop.

CHAPTER IX.

ISLAND NUMBER TEN.

Bill was the first to recover himself, and he scrambled into the boat like a monkey.

Then he turned to lend a helping hand to his friends.

"Hold on tight, Jack," he said, "and I'll pull Tom in. Give me one of your hands, Tom. Now let go with the other."

He gave a jerk and pulled Tom half in.

Then grasping him by the waistband of his trousers he finished the job.

While Tom lay sputtering in the bottom of the boat, Bill pulled Jack in.

All this while the boat was rising and falling on the turbulent waves in imminent danger of being swamped.

Providence watched over them, however, and the little craft rode like a cork on the sea.

The rudder and two pair of oars were tied in the bottom.

Bill released the rudder and after great difficulty succeeded in attaching it in its place, while his companions held on to him so that he wouldn't go overboard.

Then the oars were cut away and with Bill at the helm they put the boat before the wind and rowed just enough to steady her.

The wind drove them onward as it had the sloop, which had already foundered with her unfortunate skipper, and it was a dreary outlook they saw before themselves, although the storm was abating.

The sky lightened more and more during the next hour, during which they managed to keep their cockle-shell from being swamped.

"Do you think we'll pull through, Jack?" Tom shouted from behind.

"I hope so," replied Jack, turning his head so that his words would reach his friend.

As conversation could not very well be carried on under the circumstances, Tom said no more.

Bill kept his eyes sharp ahead.

Suddenly, as the boat rose on a wave, he saw something dark looming up in advance.

He thought it was a rock, which would mean that they were close upon some low-lying island.

"Land ho!" he shouted.

"Land!" cried Jack, with a thrill of hope. "Where?"

"Dead ahead. That is, I think it's land. It can't be a vessel, for I see no spars nor sails. It looks like a great black rock rising up through the spume. Sometimes I see it and sometimes I don't."

They were closer upon the dark object than Bill supposed.

The spray and waves rendered its position somewhat indistinct.

The sweep of the water carried them forward at such a rate that before Bill was aware of the fact they were right on top of the object, which was the forward part of a ship, imbedded in the sand of a low island or "key," as it was called.

Bill jammed the rudder to port, in a desperate effort to avoid running into the derelict, the nature of which he now recognized.

The boat started to swing around, but an intruding wave gripped it and flung it forward with tremendous force.

Crash! went the boat against the wreck, sending the three boys floundering about.

The sea rushed in at the shattered gunwale.

At that critical moment a girlish figure suddenly appeared at the bows of the sunken craft and waved her hand.

Then she stooped, picked up a rope and flung it down at the boys, who were clinging for dear life to the sinking boat.

Jack caught the end of the line and threw the slack at his friends, yelling to them to catch hold.

They did so just as the boat sank under them.

Jack pulled himself up, hand over hand, till he got a

grip on the deck and then scrambled onto the remains of the fore-castle.

He turned at once and reached down to Tom, whom Bill was assisting up, though half drowned in the dashing water himself.

Tom caught his hand and Jack helped him to the deck.

Bill needed no assistance, coming up hand over hand in sailor fashion.

Then Jack turned to thank the girl who had saved them.

To his amazement he found himself face to face with Linda Vernon.

"Miss Vernon!" he cried. "Is this really you?"

"Jack Decker!" she exclaimed, equally astonished, and delighted beyond measure.

"By George!" ejaculated Jack, grasping her hand. "To think that we should meet thus, after our failure to overtake Antoine and the boat in which he carried you off."

"Is it possible that you have been searching for me?" she said.

"Why not? Wasn't it my duty to follow and try to save you from that man?"

"But how did you know where to look for me?"

"I'll tell you later on, and of our terrible experience in this storm, which has had us in its grip for nearly twenty-four hours. Where is Antoine?"

"Asleep in a hut on the shore."

"What island is this we have landed on?"

"It is a long, low key which Antoine calls Island Number Ten."

"That means, I suppose, it's one of a group."

"It seems to be all by itself, for there are no others in sight."

"There must be nine other islands or keys somewhere in the neighborhood or it wouldn't be called Number Ten."

"It is possible there are nine other keys so low in the water as not to be distinguishable from this one."

"Have you a supply of food here? We have eaten very little since yesterday noon, and a meal of some kind would hit us about right."

"Antoine brought a small supply of provisions in his boat, which is not yet consumed, but in addition to that there is plenty of fruit and shellfish on this key. You needn't be afraid of starving, though the bill-of-fare is somewhat limited in variety," she said with a smile. "You had better take possession of the hold of this vessel, such as it is. It seems to be stanch. The greater part of the ship is sunk in the sand of the key and appears to have been here many years. There is some secret connected with her which Antoine is trying to discover. It is wholly on that account he came here, but he has not informed me of the nature of it. I suspect, however, that he is searching for a treasure which he believes is somewhere under the sand within the ribs of the wreck."

"A treasure!" exclaimed Jack, with a look of interest, while Tom and Bill cocked up their ears.

"That is the impression I have gathered from his movements since we landed here," she replied.

"Then he will have an additional reason for resenting our coming."

"He certainly won't be pleased, and you probably will have trouble with him. As there are three of you I don't

see what he can do. He has no arms outside a knife, so you ought to be able to hold your own against him."

"The only weapon we have is Bill Poole's case-knife. That reminds me that I haven't introduced my friends. This is Tom Nelson, a traveling trader, and an old friend of mine in the States; and this is Bill Poole, a sailor boy, who has lost his ship by accompanying us on this hunt after you. Tom had just been ordered off the plantation by Monsieur Laroche when Antoine abducted you and his companions fired the house, and Bill got mixed up in the mountain range while taking a run into the interior. Tom and Bill were hiding in the hut near the crevasse at the time I was taken prisoner while trying to save you. You saw the blacks bind me and throw me into the hut, but I didn't remain there long, for Tom came to my rescue. How has Antoine treated you since you've been in his power?"

"He has treated me as well as I could expect, but no longer recognizes me as superior to himself. He regards me as a kind of favored prisoner, and his declared purpose is to force me to become his wife when he takes me away from this island. Rather than submit to such a fate I had determined to drown myself when the time came. Your coming, however, has altered the situation. I no longer consider myself under his control, for I feel sure that you and your friends will protect me."

"We certainly will, Miss Vernon. We left Hayti, expecting to overhaul Antoine and take you back with us. That we did not do so in the ordinary course is not our fault. Luck was against us. The misfortune which befell us has, I am glad to say, directed us right to you, and now that we have found you you may rely on our fidelity to your interests."

"I am very grateful to you, Jack, and to your friends as well. Now that Monsieur Laroche is dead——"

"You know, then, that Antoine——"

"Murdered him? Yes. I have had the confession from his own lips, and I shudder to think of the fate that overtook my guardian at his hands. The rascal must be brought to justice, if that is possible. I was about to say that now Monsieur Laroche is dead, I am his heir by the will he made in my favor a short time ago. He expected to marry me as soon as he could gain my consent, but I never cared for him in that way, though he was as kind to me as his nature allowed him. I respected him as my guardian, and the cousin of my dead father, but otherwise—this, however, is no time to talk about that. I merely mentioned it to assure you that I shall not be ungrateful for the interest you and your friends have shown in me. Now if you will go into the hold I will bring you a supply of fruits and other eatables to supply your immediate wants."

"Very well, we will do so," answered Jack, "but had you not better let me accompany you and save you the trouble of bringing the food to us?"

"You may come with me as far as yonder banana grove, but not to the hut, for it might not be wise for you to meet Antoine alone. Your presence here would anger him greatly and might lead to trouble between you. Now that I know you are close at hand I shall have little fear of him hereafter."

Jack went with Linda as far as the grove, where she left him to procure some of the special provisions Antoine had brought with him.

While she was gone, Jack secured a big bunch of ripe bananas to take back with him, and then started to eat some of the fruit while waiting.

Linda returned in about ten minutes with her arms full, and reported that the Creole was still asleep in the hut.

The bunch of bananas was all that Jack could carry, so the girl went back to the wreck with him.

The boy bade her good-by for the time being and carried the eatables into the fore part of the hold, which was what remained of the original fore-castle.

The sand had forced in the bulkhead and invaded a part of it, but there was still lots of space for the three boys to move around in."

After making a hearty meal they took off their damp garments and wrung the moisture out of them.

They hung them around on the remains of the bunks and then burrowed into the sand in the darkest corner to take a much-needed sleep, trusting that Antoine would not visit the buried vessel for some hours, if at all that day.

In a very brief time tired nature asserted itself and they slept the dreamless slumber of those utterly fagged out.

CHAPTER X.

ANTOINE AND HIS PRISONER.

In the course of an hour, Antoine awoke and, stepping to the door of the hut, took a look at the weather.

The building was a good-sized one, and divided into two rooms by a partition and a door covered by a piece of sailcloth.

Linda occupied the inner part, but she was not there now.

She was standing at the foot of a cocoanut tree, not far from the wreck, watching the heaving ocean and the heavy surf that rolled in on the beach.

The storm clouds were breaking up and the sun was shining brightly once more.

The hut was in the midst of a grove and sheltered from the worst of the wind.

The trees were so thick that the shore and ocean could not be seen through them.

After he had noted that the gale was breaking up fast, he left the grove and came out on a sandy ridge where he had a plain view of the sunken ship.

He saw Linda under the tree and advanced toward her.

"What are you thinking of?" he asked. "The plantation in Hayti or that boy who tried to rescue you?"

"Neither," she answered, curtly. "I was looking at the sea, that's all."

"The sea, eh? I see nothing interesting in it at this moment. In a few hours it will be calm again—as calm as the day we arrived here," he said.

"I was also wondering why you brought me to this deserted key."

"I brought you here because it is a place where we are safe from pursuit."

"Is that your only reason for coming here?"

"What other reason can I have?"

"I thought maybe that wreck had something to do with it."

"Why the wreck?" he said, looking at her intently.

"Because you seem to be greatly interested in it."

"You have sharp eyes. You have been watching me."

"I have nothing to occupy my mind except to observe what is going on around me, which is little enough in such a spot as this. Yes, I have been watching you. Why are you digging at that wreck?"

"To amuse myself," replied Antoine, carelessly.

"Yesterday you dug all morning, right up to the time that the gale came down on this key and compelled you to stop. Were you only amusing yourself? It looks to me like hard work. You did not work so industriously on the plantation."

"You are curious, I see. You suspect I have some definite object in view?"

"I am sure you have."

Antoine looked down at the sand, then at the rolling ocean, and finally at the girl.

"Well," he said, "I admit that I have."

"What is it?"

"Why do you wish to know?"

"To satisfy my curiosity."

"If I am successful your curiosity shall be satisfied."

"Successful—in what?"

"In finding what I am searching for."

"And that is——"

"The secret of the sunken ship."

"Ah, I was not wrong. I suspected as much."

"Why should you suspect anything? Have you heard about——"

"What?"

"This sunken ship and the gold her rotting timbers are supposed to hide?"

Linda shook her head.

"No, perhaps you'll tell me," she said.

"I will on one condition," he answered, with a peculiar look.

"And the condition is——"

"That you consent to marry me when the time comes."

The girl drew away from him with a little shudder.

"I never can marry a murderer," she said.

He looked disappointed.

"Is it murder to avenge a terrible wrong?"

"Nothing whatever justifies an act such as you have been guilty of."

"If you had suffered——"

"Perhaps you think I have suffered nothing since the hour you dragged me a helpless victim from the plantation."

"I did not intend at first to carry you far, or hold you prisoner long. I wanted to use you as a decoy. I have told you so before. But your beauty——"

"You need not try to excuse yourself. Let us talk about the wreck. You are hunting for the secret, if one there be, and you believe it is a treasure. How came you to learn that this wreck, which must have come ashore on this island many years ago, held, or was supposed to hold, a secret?"

"Perhaps I dreamed it."

"I do not believe that."

"Suppose it is a fact that this wreck holds a large amount of gold—a million maybe, in Spanish money? Suppose I find it, then it will be mine, won't it? You are a woman. You love fine things—dresses, jewels, luxury! Well, if I offer you all that your heart can wish for will you still refuse to link your fate with mine?"

Linda uttered a short, mirthless laugh.

"Do you imagine that there is nothing more precious in this world to a woman than the things you have mentioned? What are splendid clothes, priceless jewels and luxury when linked with misery? No, not all the money and splendor of this world would tempt me to marry you. Find the secret of this sunken gold ship if you can, but seek not to share it with me."

"And that is your answer?"

"It is."

"Suppose when I have found the gold and am ready to leave the island with it, I offer you the choice of becoming my wife and living like a queen, or abandoning you here on this key which is never visited by passing vessels, what would your answer be?"

"The same as it is now," she replied, calmly.

He regarded her curiously.

"You are but a girl—scarcely more than seventeen. You do not understand the fate of one marooned indefinitely on a solitary key in the midst of a wide ocean. Think it over. You have the time to do so, for it will be many days before I can wrest from the sand the secret of the gold ship."

"I am no fortune-teller, but I tell you now that if gold there be in yonder wreck it will never be yours."

"Ha! Why do you say that?" he said, almost angrily.

"I tell you it shall be mine. I alone possess a clew to the secret, and though we stay here years it shall be mine at last—at last, do you understand?"

"You forget that man proposes but heaven disposes. He who sheds man's blood by man shall his blood be shed. Your fate is written in characters that cannot be rubbed out. Before many hours you will learn that even this desolate key will not shield you from the avenging arm of justice."

"Before many hours! What do you mean, girl?" cried the Creole, not a little startled by her words.

"You must find that out for yourself. The weather is moderating. Go dig for the secret. I have no wish to hold further talk with you."

This speaking, she walked away toward the grove and disappeared into it, but only far enough to hide herself from his gaze.

Through the interstices in the foliage she watched to see what he would do.

For awhile he did nothing.

His superstitious mind was moved by the seeming prophecy she had uttered.

And yet he could see nothing in it.

Island Number Ten was never visited purposely by any craft that skimmed that stretch of the Bahamas.

It was known simply as a sandy key, a little larger than the nine other keys surrounding it, which, owing to their low, bank-like character, were a standing menace

to navigators and consequently the vicinity was always given a wide berth.

Why it was called Number Ten when the other keys or banks had no designating number, Antoine did not know himself.

It was charted as Island Number Ten, consequently it had no official significance, but among those who sailed those tropic waters it was known by that name, and was recognized as a hoodoo to be avoided.

"Bah! the girl was trying to frighten me," muttered Antoine, giving the sand an impatient kick. "Before many hours I will learn that this desolate key will not shield me from the avenging arm of justice. What nonsense! I care nothing for the avenging arm of justice, at least here. When I leave, the world will have forgotten the fate of Vincent Laroche, and in some far-off land, with gold to buy even the souls of men, I shall be safe—quite safe. But I shall not be satisfied unless I can win this fair girl for my bride. The more I see of her the more I desire her lasting companionship. A year on this island will tame her haughty spirit, I think, and render her more pliable to a fate she cannot escape and live."

He turned on his heel, went back to the hut and presently reappeared with a spade, which he had brought from Hayti with him, evidently for the purpose he was now putting it to, and walking down to the wreck, resumed work at a certain point in the sand, which he had figured out as about over the stern of the buried gold ship.

The storm had nearly filled up the excavation he had already made, but not at all discouraged at the prospect of having to do a great part of his previous labor over again, he set to work with a will and was soon making the sand fly.

Linda watched him till she was satisfied that he had no immediate intention of going into the exposed forecastle part where the boys were sheltered, and then she walked back to the hut, wondering what would happen when the Creole became aware that Jack Decker and his two friends were on the key also.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CRY FOR HELP.

The three boys slept until sunset, by which time the only evidence that remained of the recent storm was the still agitated sea.

The wind had dropped to a light, warm breeze, while the sky was without a solitary cloud.

Far away on the western horizon the luminary that shines for all hung like a burnished round shield, reflecting a glittering pathway straight to and beyond the key.

Antoine had ceased work some time since, so that when the three boys came out of their sleeping quarters they found the entire beach deserted.

The only sound they heard was the monotonous roar of the surf on the shore, and the splash of the waves against the exposed bows of the wreck.

But for a light column of smoke which rose above the tree-tops of the grove, the island would have looked to be quite devoid of life.

"Antoine is cooking supper, I guess," said Jack, pointing at the smoke.

"That's where the hut is that the young lady mentioned," said Tom.

"I suppose so," returned Jack.

"Well, my hearties, we had a narrow escape from going to Davy Jones' Locker," said Bill. "Shiver my jibbooms! if I get back to the States I think I'll give up going to sea."

"How are we ever going to get off this island?" asked Tom.

"Why, Antoine has a sloop tied up somewhere here," said Jack.

"Suppose he has. You don't imagine he's going to let us take it, do you?"

"After we have made a prisoner of him, as we'll have to do in order to rescue Miss Vernon, he won't be able to prevent us taking it."

"When are you going to try to capture him—to-night, while he's asleep?"

"I haven't thought about that yet. I fancy it will be as much as the three of us can do to secure him. He's got a knife, you know, and he won't hesitate to use it to save himself."

"I'm not anxious to be carved up, particularly where there's no doctor to sew me up," said Tom.

"Say, my barnacles, what do you say to tackling the rest of our grub?" said Bill. "My hold feels as if it needed some ballast."

"All right. Go down and fetch up the bananas and other odds and ends," said Jack, who was not averse to a bite himself.

There was plenty to go around, with bananas to spare.

They squatted down on the weather-stained deck of the hulk and filled in, while the sun sank to rest and darkness fell without any intervening twilight.

It was really not dark, for the sky was resplendent with myriads of stars.

Indeed, they could easily make out the entire outline of the key, and the great field of heavy water around about them.

"A pipeful of tobacky would come in handy now," said Bill, who had learned to smoke aboard ship. "It kind of soothes a chap's nerves."

"You can have all the tobacco you can smoke when we get back to the plantation," said Jack. "We've got a big field of it growing."

"That gal is a lucky one if she comes into all that dead planter's property," said Bill. "Why don't you make up to her, Jack? Then you'd become a planter yourself instead of an overseer on measly wages."

"Don't talk about such a thing," replied Jack, a bit sharply, for he didn't care to discuss such a subject.

The sentiments he felt toward Linda he wished to keep to himself.

"Say," said Tom, "do you think there's anything in what Miss Vernon said about a treasure being buried in this old hulk?"

"How could I tell that?" replied Jack.

"Douse my belaying pins! It would be first rate for us if we could turn up a pirate treasure on this hooker," said

Bill. "We'd all be able to live on the fat of the land for the rest of our lives."

"That's right," said Tom. "I'd be willing to make a compromise with that Creole if he'd let us in on his secret. What do you say, Jack? Don't you think it's worth considering? We won't gain anything by bringing him back to Hayti. He'd only be in the way during the trip, and probably would give us lots of trouble. We might make a bargain with him to help him hunt for this treasure, and if we found it we could divide it into four parts. Then we could agree to land him on Great Inagua Island with his share and let him shift for himself after that."

"Antoine's fate rests wholly with Miss Vernon," said Jack. "She is the one who has suffered at his hands, and she shall decide what is to be done with him."

"But if there is a chance to discover a treasure through him I think it ought not to be missed. You must put the matter up to her, Jack," said Tom.

"Maybe she'll be able to give us a clew to the secret herself, for it's possible he has told her something about it. In that case we could hunt for it ourselves with reference to him. I object to making terms with a murderer."

"It's likely we may have to remain on this island long enough to find the treasure, if there's one here," said Tom.

"No use of discussing it until we learn more on the subject," said Jack. "Let's take a stroll along the shore. The chances are we won't meet Antoine if we don't go near the grove."

The others were willing, so the three got on their feet and walked straight off the planks into the sand.

Before they had gone far they came to the excavation that had been started by the Creole.

He had made considerable progress that day, as he was anxious to reach the remains of the cabin where he believed the gold was buried.

"Hello!" cried Tom. "What's this?"

"A hole, evidently," replied Jack.

"Any fool can see that. There's a spade sticking in it that shows plainly enough that Antoine was working here while we slept. Why is he digging the hole? To get at the treasure which he believes is in the hold of the wreck, under tons of sand. He's got a job on his hands, but it's a job I'd tackle in a minute if I thought, as he no doubt does, that I should find a chest of money when I got down far enough."

"It would take you several times longer to find it than Antoine, if such a thing is there. He's used to working under a tropical sun, while you are not. You would sweat yourself to a grease spot in two days," chuckled Jack.

"Don't you worry about me. A fellow will do a lot when he sees gold coin at the other end of the job," said Jack.

"Keel haul me! but you're right, Tom," interjected Bill.

"Well, I'll admit that this hole strengthens the theory of a treasure being buried in the ship," said Jack.

"Bet you life it does!" nodded Tom, with a vigorous wag of his head.

"It's worth while looking into," continued Jack. "When we meet Miss Vernon again we'll talk the subject over with her."

At that moment a figure came out from behind the trees and advanced toward them.

It was Linda, who had left Antoine smoking at the door of the hut and started out to visit the boys at the wreck.

The Creole paid no attention to her movements, as he supposed her object was to get away from him.

As long as she refused to be sociable he didn't care where she strolled to, for she couldn't leave the island and, therefore, was just as much his prisoner as if he had her locked up in her room.

"Here comes the gal!" said Bill, who noticed her first.

The others turned and saw Linda approaching.

Jack stepped forward to meet her.

"Glad to have you with us again, Miss Vernon," he said. "I suppose Antoine is still ignorant of our presence on the island?"

"Yes, but he can't remain long so. To-morrow he will probably learn the truth."

"Yes, I guess so, for we're not going to remain under cover in fear of him. By the way, we were just speculating about this hole here. Is this not evidence that Antoine is searching for a hidden treasure?"

"It is."

"Has he told you anything about it?"

"Nothing. I tried to worm the secret out of him a few hours ago, but he refused to tell me anything except on a condition that I wouldn't entertain."

"What condition was that?"

"That I would promise to become his wife."

"Which is ridiculous."

"Nothing would ever make me consent to that," she said.

"Do you think there really is a treasure in the hold of this ship under the sand?"

"I am sure Antoine believes there is," she replied.

"That appears to be evident from the labor he is putting in here. Now, the question is, are we to capture him and carry him and you back to Hayti in his boat, where it will be our duty to turn him over to the authorities to be prosecuted for the murder of Monsieur Laroche, or shall we make a deal with him for a share of this presumed treasure, help him dig for it, and if found carry him to the nearest port and let him go with his share?" said Jack.

"Do you wish to have it that way?" she asked.

"To tell you the truth, it goes against my grain to make any terms with him, but, of course, the prospect of finding a treasure is a temptation, and my friends wished me to put the matter up to you."

"Don't consider me in it. If it will avoid trouble and possible bloodshed to make a compromise with him, do so. If he thought you intended to capture him and return him to Hayti he would make a desperate resistance, and there is no telling what the result might be. My safety depends on you maintaining the upper hand."

"And your safety is more important than handing him over to justice, much as he deserves it," said Jack.

"He told me that he intends to leave the key as soon as he has found the buried gold, and that unless I promise to marry him at the first port he reaches we will sail away without me, leaving me alone on the island."

"I daresay that was no bluff, for he would not dare to

take you to any port unless he felt some assurance that you would not betray him," said Jack.

"Now that you and your friends are here his threat has no terrors for me."

"Well, Tom, Bill and I will hold a council of war before we turn in to decide what we shall do. In the meantime let us walk around the island. It is doubtless familiar to you, but we want to get an idea of its size and shape from actual observation."

"I will be glad to go with you, for I have no wish to return to the hut and the society of Antoine," she replied.

"Come on, fellows," said Jack, starting off in advance with Linda.

It was the first time that Jack had the pleasure of the girl's company for any length of time, and despite the circumstances in which they were placed he enjoyed every moment of it.

Linda enjoyed the walk as much as he, for her heart had been taken by the young American from the moment she first met him, and she found more to admire in him the longer she knew him.

The wide beach extended all around the island without a break, and brought them back to their starting point in front of the wreck.

There they parted with Linda and she tripped back to the grove.

"Well, fellows, Miss Vernon has left the matter of Antoine with us. To-morrow we are bound to meet him. What line of action shall we follow?" said Jack.

Before Tom or Bill could make a reply a succession of shrill screams rang out on the night air.

They undoubtedly came from Linda.

She was in trouble, and in a moment Jack's fighting blood was up.

"Something is up. That rascal——"

"Help! help! Jack, save me!" came in appealing tones from the grove.

"Follow me, fellows. This must be a fight to a finish!"

Jack darted toward the grove, and Tom and Bill, the latter drawing his sheath-knife, for the defense of himself and his friends, followed at his heels.

CHAPTER XII.

THE CAPTURE OF THE CREOLE.

The cries were suddenly choked off, and Jack, wild with apprehension, dashed through the trees into the little clearing where the hut stood.

It was silent and deserted.

"The scoundrel has carried her off somewhere!" cried Jack. "Has he murdered her, or does he mean to do so? If any harm happens to her I'll kill him!"

It occurred to Jack that Antoine had carried Linda to the sloop, which was moored in a bite of the shore.

They had seen the vessel during their walk around the key.

Maybe he had discovered their presence on the island, had waited for the girl to return and then decided to abandon the island and the treasure hunt for awhile, and

take Linda away with him till he thought it safe to return.

Jack led the way down to the place where they had seen the sloop.

As they dashed out of the trees on to the beach, they saw a figure aboard the little craft, hoisting the sail.

Linda was not in sight, so it was clear she had been shut up in the cabin.

"He's trying to get away from the island!" cried Jack. "And has carried Miss Vernon aboard his sloop. We must stop him at all risk!"

The boat was already floating away from the shore.

There was little surf on this side of the island, as the storm had come from the opposite direction.

The wind was so light that Antoine could not get much headway on her, even with the sail, as he hauled it up.

The boys shot forward into the water and swam for the craft.

Antoine saw them coming, and after making the halcyards fast he drew his knife to make a fight of it.

But he could not tackle the three at one time, and the boys, realizing that fact, separated.

Jack approached the stern, where Antoine was ready for him, while Tom made for the starboard side and Bill, with his knife between his teeth, for the port side.

"Keep away or I will kill you!" cried the Creole.

"Better give up and save trouble," replied Jack. "We mean business. There are three of us and you haven't a chance to get away."

"So it's you, Mars' Jack!" said the man, with a scowl. "You mean to take me back to Hayti."

"That's where you deserve to go."

"I'll die first!" he hissed.

"Throw up your hands and I'll give you a chance."

"What chance?"

"We'll take charge of the sloop and land you at one of the towns of Great Inagua."

"Do you mean that?" asked Antoine, who realized that he could not make a successful resistance against the three, though he might kill one of them.

"I give you my word."

"I'll trust you, Mars' Jack, but you're the only person I'd yield to. Rather than take chances with others, I'd fight to the death. Come aboard."

He put up his knife and extended a hand to Jack.

By that time Tom and Bill were in the sloop and were about to rush upon the Creole when Jack stopped them.

"He's surrendered, fellows. Let him alone."

He clambered in over the stern, seized the rudder and put the sloop about.

In five minutes she was back at her moorings again, Antoine watching his captors in sullen silence.

As soon as she was securely moored, Jack told the Creole to step ashore.

"You must consider yourself our prisoner until we let you go," said Jack to him.

"You will keep your word with me?" asked Antoine.

"You can depend on it. I never say one thing and mean another. I need not have made any terms with you, for we could have captured you anyway."

"At the risk of your lives," replied the Creole, tensely.

"Perhaps, but had you hurt one of us your death would have followed."

"Better die than be taken back to Hayti where I would not have a fair show."

"Well, you won't be taken back, at least by us. We shall land you at any port you mention in Great Inagua, after which you must look after yourself."

"And after landing me you will not set the authorities on my track?"

"No; but I shall have to report what we did with you, when we return to Hayti, so it will be well that you get away from Great Inagua as soon as you can."

"I will."

Jack then unlocked the cabin door and released Linda.

From the sounds she had heard she knew that the boys had captured the sloop, and her anxiety had been relieved.

"You have saved me again, Jack," she said, placing her hands in his. "I can never be too grateful to you—and your friends," she added.

"We heard your screams and, of course, knew something was wrong and started at once to your aid," replied Jack. "Why did Antoine make such a sudden attempt to carry you away from this island? Was it because he learned of our presence here?"

"Yes. He saw me walking with you boys. He did not know who you were, but he recognized you as enemies. A murderer feels that every man's hand is against him. The moment I returned to the grove I found him waiting for me. He demanded to know who you were and how you came here. I told him the truth. Then he said there was no safety for him here. That you would doubtless make an attempt to capture him on the morrow, or maybe while he slept. He would not wait for you to put your plans into execution, but leave the key while the chance was his. Of course, I must go with him. I declared I would not go. Whereupon he seized me and swore he would kill me if I refused to accompany him. I screamed and tried to escape him, but he was too quick for me. He carried me aboard the sloop and locked me in the cabin. I heard him making hasty preparations to sail and my heart sank at the fate which seemed before me. Then I heard you coming and—but I need say no more," said Linda.

"To avoid bloodshed, I made a deal with him," said Jack. "I agreed to let him go free at any port we stop at on our way back to Hayti."

"Very well," replied the girl. "I have no fault to find with you for doing so. But I advise you to watch him until you are ready to leave, or he may make his escape in the sloop and leave us all prisoners on the island."

"I shall do my best to block any such move on his part. Now we will return to the hut. We shall remain there to guard you, while Antoine will have to content himself with the quarters in the sunken wreck."

On their way to the grove, Jack told Antoine that he must keep away from the grove from that time forth.

"You must consider that a part of our terms," said Jack. "Your connection with Miss Vernon is over. I shall require you to keep away from her. You ought to know that she can never be anything to you."

"Do you intend to leave the island to-morrow?" asked the Creole.

"No. I have another proposition to make to you."

"Another proposition! What do you mean?" asked Antoine, suspiciously.

"You have been digging in the sand above the stern of the wreck. Miss Vernon has told me that you are searching for a treasure you believe to be buried somewhere in the vessel. You would not undertake such a heavy job unless you had some very good reason for the belief. Now I'll make a bargain with you. Tell me all you know about this secret treasure. If I think the chance of finding it good, I and my friends will help you dig for it. Our united efforts will accomplish the job in a fourth of the time it would take you alone. Should the treasure be found, be it small or large, we will divide it in four equal parts. One of the parts shall be yours, to take away when we land you, according to our agreement. You can think the matter over and give me an answer in the morning, or you can say yes or no now."

"What if I refuse?" said Antoine.

"Then we three will prosecute the search ourselves at the spot you began work, and if we unearth a treasure you will receive nothing."

"I will give you my answer in the morning."

"Very well. Now you had better go to the wreck and turn in there for the night. Let me warn you not to try to play a march on us by trying to steal the sloop. You will fail, for we shall keep a continuous watch while we remain on the island. Should you try to round on us we will consider it a breach of faith on your part and then our agreement with you to set you free will no longer be binding on us."

"Mars' Jack, you have got me at all points. I have no chance against you and your friends. I will make no attempt to run off with the sloop."

"You had better not. We cannot afford to take your word for it, for we dare not take the least chance of being marooned on this key, which is doubtless scarcely ever visited by a vessel. Therefore, we shall watch. Now, good night."

Jack turned away, and Antoine started slowly toward the place where the sunken gold ship lay like a ghostly fabric in the starlight.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SECRET OF THE BURIED GOLD SHIP.

The boys cast lots to see who should stand the first watch of three hours as near as could be estimated, and the choice fell on Tom.

Jack was to relieve him at around midnight, and Bill was to stand the last watch till after sunrise.

Linda retired to her inner room and lay down to sleep, with a pleasurable feeling of security—the first she had experienced since her abduction.

Nothing happened during the night, and when day dawned the sea was almost as calm as a mill pond, and broke with a musical ripple on the beach instead of the thunderous noise of the two previous days.

After breakfast the boys, accompanied by Linda, walked

to the wreck, where they saw Antoine sitting moodily on a fragment of the bulwark.

"Well," said Jack, "have you decided to stand in with us in the treasure hunt? Quarter of a loaf is better than no bread, provided the quest is a success, not speaking of the advantage of our labor."

"Yes," replied the Creole. "There is anywhere from half a million to a million in Spanish gold in this wreck, so I won't fare so bad if I get but a quarter of it."

"As much as that?" cried Jack, astonished, while the eyes of Tom and Bill fairly bulged.

"Yes, as much as that," replied Antoine. "This vessel was wrecked on this key twenty years ago, and every soul perished. She carried the pay-chest of the Spanish army in Cuba, en route to the general commandante. She was searched for but never found, and has ever since remained here, slowly sinking into the sand of the shore, as you see her now. No one ever comes to this key, for vessels avoid it on account of the nine sand banks surrounding it which, even at low tide, are never higher than the level of the sea. One large bank is yonder, only three-quarters of a mile away," he said, waving his arm out toward the southwest. "It is now low tide. Can you see it?"

The boys looked, intently, but admitted that they couldn't distinguish a sign of it.

"How came you to learn about her, and that there was a treasure chest in her hold? If all hands were lost, why did not the secret remain with her crumbling timbers?" said Jack.

"A Creole I knew well was driven ashore here in a gale. His sloop did not go to pieces, fortunately for him, but landed close under the lee of the wreck. He had heard about the lost ship which carried the pay of the Spanish army. Her name was the Esmeralda, and when he looked at this wreck the name was still to be made out on her bows. The man was elated at his discovery, and his first idea was to report the matter to the Spanish government, hoping to get a large reward for the information. On his way to Cuba he changed his mind and decided to secure the gold by sharing the knowledge with somebody on whom he could rely. He picked me out, and shaping his course for Hayti, started to look me up."

"Well?" said Jack, while the others looked interested.

"After several weeks he found me and told me about this sunken gold ship. He proposed that we visit it together, dig for the chest and divide the treasure. Of course, I agreed. Before we had completed our arrangement he was taken down with a fever and died. His sloop was taken possession of by his relatives and sold, and so I could do nothing, as I had no money to secure another craft at that time. But I started in to save for that purpose, and by degrees managed to get enough together to buy the sloop in which I came here with Miss Linda. That is all. If my friend made no mistake in the vessel, if this is really the lost Esmeralda then there is close on to a million in Spanish money in her cabin."

"The only way to decide the matter is to dig down into the cabin and hunt for the chest," said Jack. "It will be a stupendous job—one that will take time, but I think it worth taking chances on. What do you say, fellows?"

"We're with you!" replied Tom and Bill together.

Jack held a consultation with Antoine on the subject, and he said he had brought along a light shovel and other implements which he figured would come in handy later on.

So Jack went to the sloop and brought the shovel up.

The first job fell to Tom, and Jack stood around and bossed the work for awhile, after which he and Linda, with Bill, retired to the shade of the trees.

They worked steadily all day and made good progress.

After supper, Jack announced that he had solved the problem of looking after the sloop without keeping a night watch.

He said that he would sleep at the hut, while Tom and Bill should sleep aboard the craft, which would prevent Antoine, if he changed his mind, from taking possession of the vessel without their knowledge.

Day after day they worked at the wreck, but the further they progressed the more difficult the job became.

They worked cheerfully, however, for they were buoyed up with the expectation of finding a princely fortune, even one-fourth of which would make its possessor independent for life.

CHAPTER XIV.

CONCLUSION.

The fine weather lasted for nearly a month, without any particular change, and then a big storm burst on the island which lasted three days.

After a three days' enforced rest, the diggers resumed their work.

They had to remove a lot of sand that had drifted into the hole.

Indeed, it took them three days of hard work to recover lost ground.

After that the digging went on steadily.

At the end of two weeks they encountered the roof of the cabin.

Clearing a large space away they broke it in with an axe.

They found the cabin half full of sand, which had found its way in through the opening where the skylight had been.

It was necessary to dig the sand away up to and around the skylight opening before making any attempt to work in the cabin itself.

This took them another fortnight of heavy labor.

The job of freeing the cabin of at least a part of the sand was the most difficult part of the work so far.

"This would have been a year's work for you, Antoine," said Jack.

The Creole nodded.

He was now able to estimate what a prodigious proposition he had been up against.

They had to hoist the sand out with a bucket, and this was slow work.

Three weeks elapsed before they had the cabin cleared so as to be able to get at the staterooms.

They found many things of use to them in the rooms, and a great deal more that they didn't care for.

Each one was inspected in turn, but, to their disappointment, there was no sign of a chest containing money.

There was plenty of evidence that the sunken vessel was the wreck of the Esmeralda.

They found the log book, the mate's account books, the charts and various other articles inscribed with the ship's name.

There was a small safe in the captain's stateroom, which doubtless contained something of value, but they were utterly unable to get into it.

They seemed to have reached the end of their tether.

If the chest of gold was aboard it must be somewhere in the hold, and they soon found that the hold was now a solid mass of sand, as far as they could make out, at least.

"This is tough," said Tom. "After weeks of hard work we seem to be fated to miss the reward we have looked forward to."

"Jib booms and marling spikes!" growled Bill. "I call this tough luck."

"I should say so," said Tom. "What are we going to do now, Jack?"

"I'd like to get into that safe," he replied.

"If we had some gunpowder we might blow it open."

"We haven't any gunpowder."

"Then I don't see how you can get into it."

Jack got up and went over to the captain's lockers and made a closer search of them.

He brought out a writing desk and looked into it.

It was filled with writing materials and a pile of papers.

On top of them he saw a memorandum book.

Opening it he began to look carefully over it.

Fifteen minutes elapsed and then Jack came across figures, which his experience in office work led him to believe was the combination.

He applied them to the safe, manipulated the handle in accordance with them and at last opened the steel doors.

"Eureka!" he cried, triumphantly.

He overhauled the interior of the safe and almost the first thing he found were several small bags of Spanish money.

He found most everything he expected the safe contained and at last a document describing a chest containing \$800,000 in gold.

It was stowed in a small space directly under the captain's cabin.

The treasure hunters were overjoyed, and Jack called for the axe.

It was produced, and he looked around on the floor to find some evidence of a trap-door.

The trap was so artfully hidden that the axe had to be brought into use before it was located.

At last the compartment was found and broken into.

There lay the heavy money-chest, just as it was deposited there.

The task of breaking it open was a heavy one, at which each took a hand in turn.

The work was interrupted by the fall of night, but next day was resumed.

It was late in the afternoon before the cover was wrenched off and tiers of bags of golden money revealed to the eyes of the delighted treasure seekers.

Next day they carried the bags of gold to the surface in the bucket and conveyed them to the hut.

"To-morrow we will divide them into four equal parts,"

said Jack, "and each will take charge of his own share and stow it aboard the sloop."

It was a jolly supper of shellfish and fruit that the entire party, including Antoine, sat down to that evening.

Nothing was talked of but the money and the prospect of leaving the island for good on the morrow.

Antoine retired to the hold of the wreck as usual and the others to their usual roosting places.

During the night a terrific hurricane broke over the island.

Tom and Bill were awakened by the pitching of the sloop.

They tumbled out and saw that the vessel would be carried away unless she was better secured, although she was not exposed to the full force of the storm.

They got out all the spare lines and tied the craft to the trees near at hand and then, fearing to trust themselves aboard of her, took refuge in the hut with Jack.

The storm was as short as it was fierce and was entirely over by sunrise.

Then the boys made the discovery that the exposed portion of the wreck had disappeared, and with it had gone Antoine.

There was no doubt that he had met his fate in the sea and gone to his final account during the storm.

That was his finish, at any rate, and when the gold was divided, Antoine's share was presented to Linda, who accepted it as a kind of balm for what she had suffered at the rascal's hands.

The party returned to Hayti without meeting any misadventure, and Linda was joyfully received at the plantation, which Vincent Laroche's will made her the mistress of.

Tom and Bill remained three months there, until after the ceremony which united Jack and Linda, and then they returned to the States like nabobs, with their share of the gold.

Jack, of course, became boss of the plantation, and the hands much preferred him to their former employer, whose body was never recovered from the depths of the crevasse.

With the money recovered from the buried gold ship, and a valuable plantation, Jack and Linda became the most important people in Hayti, and to this day people refer to them as a splendidly mated and happy couple, though there are silver strands in their hair and a grown family around them.

For fear of a complication with the Spanish government, Jack and Linda have never breathed a word, even to their children, about the secret of the buried gold ship.

Next week's issue will contain "A WALL STREET ERRAND BOY, AND HOW HE MADE MONEY IN STOCKS."

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THE TEN DOCTORS

OR,

TWENTY YEARS IN SEARCH OF A DIAMOND

By PAUL BRADDON

(CHAPTER XI—Continued)

"You will not receive my wife!" cried the younger man; "then you shall not receive me. Where I go, she goes also."

"Ah! she is one miserable!" replied the old man, fiercely. "She is one vile woman! and shall never darken my doors—never!"

"They kept up this sort of thing for more than an hour, in true French style, parting at last evidently in a great rage.

"The son was a merry, light-hearted young fellow, and I had always felt an interest in him; therefore I was sorry to see him thus quarrel with his parent. But it was not my affair; therefore I did not interfere.

"Another week passed, during which I saw but little of the father and nothing at all of the son.

"In fact, I scarcely thought of either until the morning of that memorable day—the 10th of July. It was then that a startling event occurred, and however little it may remain in your memory, Detective Roach, I can assure you it is firmly fixed in mine."

Simon Munhall paused as though expecting some reply, but there was none, and he again resumed his story.

"I had been studying very hard on my case—too hard in fact—and experienced a strange feeling of lassitude at times. In fact, so closely had I applied myself that I came to my office as early as six o'clock, and put in two or three hours' work before the business of the day began.

"On the morning in question the heat was intense, and having become greatly overheated with my walk down-town, when I reached my office I felt very badly—so badly, in fact, that I determined to go and consult a doctor.

"I looked at my watch—it was twenty-five minutes past eight; I turned to leave the room, when my attention was suddenly attracted by a terrible cry.

"It proceeded from the rooms of the old Frenchman opposite.

"The cry was:

"Murder!"

"Murder!"

"Murder!"

"Three times it was repeated, each time louder than before.

"I rushed to the window, and looked across the street.

"A man had just shut the window of the office opposite, and was retreating into the room.

"The curtain, which raised from the bottom, was almost drawn, but I, from my position, could see over the top of it, and plainly beheld two forms standing over the sofa-bedstead on which the old man lay.

"One was his son; but the other was, to me, a stranger.

"It was he who had cried 'murder' from the window but a moment before.

"Fancy my horror to see in the hands of the son—that

bright-eyed merry youth whom I had so admired—a huge club or bludgeon with which he bent over his father as though he would beat his brains out.

"I looked again, and what do you suppose I saw?"

Simon Munhall looked toward his companion.

No answer—the man's countenance had become livid.

"Again I ask you, Detective Roach, what do you suppose I saw?" repeated Simon, impressively.

Turning suddenly upon him with ferocity of despair:

"You saw me murder my father!" the other fairly shouted in tones of intense agony.

"Speak out, man—speak out, and torture me thus no more! I did the foul deed—I did it with these hands! I did it, and I've met my punishment! But no matter—shout it out! Proclaim it from the house-tops! Shout out those terrible words:

"Parricide!"

"Parricide!"

"Parricide!"

"Shout them so that the very dead can hear! I deserve it all—and more."

He hid his face in his hands, and strong man that he was, with the deep wells of feeling dry for years within him, he burst into tears.

"I will speak out! I will shout it from the house-tops when the proper time arrives, and when I do, this is what I shall say:

"Dominique de la Roche—for you and that light-hearted boy known to me by that name twenty years ago are one—Dominique de la Roche, you did not murder your father!"

His companion uttered a loud exclamation and seized the detective by the arm.

"Man—man!" he cried, "what is this? I have suffered for my crime for twenty years—suffered physically and suffered mentally—suffered mentally the tortures of the damned, and now—"

"Now you are told that you have been suffering for a crime which you never committed!" replied Simon, quickly; "and you are told the truth—I saw it all! You dashed the bludgeon away, and sank to the floor with a loud cry; for an instant your companion hesitated, and then seizing the club, he struck the apparently sleeping man a fearful blow about the head, and continued to rain down blows until life must have been extinct."

"And you saw all this and have kept silence for twenty years? Oh, heavens, had you but spoken before, how much suffering and anguish I might have been saved?"

"I kept silent from necessity," replied Munhall, quickly.

"Hear the rest of my story and judge."

"The man stooped to the floor and forced the bludgeon into the tightly-clenched hand of the prostrate boy.

"Then he rushed to the window again, and flinging it up, shouted:

"Murder!"

"Murder!"

"Murder!"

"My brain reeled with horror.

"What fearful plot was this?

"This villain, then, was about to make it appear that his son had murdered his father!

"A plot!

"A foul, dastardly plot!

"It was too much for my overheated brain. I fell to the floor in a dead faint.

"When I recovered my senses, which could have been but a few minutes later, although it seemed to me an age, I began to realize what it all meant."

"I felt that I had not an instant to lose.

"I rushed from my office into the street, and hatless and coatless as I was.

"I was so weak that I could scarcely walk. My brain seemed on fire; but notwithstanding all this, in less time than I take to tell it, I had gained the room beyond.

"It was already crowded with people—so quickly do crowds gather in New York.

"They were trying to raise the unfortunate boy from the floor, where he lay unconscious and covered with blood, the fatal club firmly clutched in his hand.

"The real murderer stood before the bed talking volubly to the police, who had now arrived.

"I was wild with excitement. Pushing my way violently through the crowd, I rushed to the bed, and, with uplifted hand, would have denounced the man as he stood, when everything suddenly seemed to swim before me, my brain reeled, and I sank unconscious to the floor.

"My opportunity was gone!

"When I recovered my senses, I lay in Bellevue Hospital.

"I had been there three months, suffering from an attack of brain fever.

"When I found myself able to go out, I was like a man in a strange world.

"Friends I had possessed but few—relatives none. My little practice and my money were all gone.

"Of the exciting events of that day I had never ceased to think.

"An opportunity offered for me to become a detective. I eagerly embraced it, and determined to ferret out the true inwardness of that morning's work.

"The old Frenchman was said to have been buried in the church-yard you have just left; the son had been sentenced to Sing Sing for life; the entire estate had been taken possession of by a Dr. Marius Burk, nephew by marriage of the old man.

"I tried to ferret out the mystery, but could make nothing of it. I admit I might have been more active, but my interest gradually died out, and——"

"And I remained in Sing Sing prison for twenty long years!" replied his companion, slowly, and with much sadness.

Simon hung his head.

"But I forgive you," replied the other; "forgive you, for in what you have done to-night you have taken a great load from my heart, for now I know that I did not murder my dear father!"

The cab had come to a halt.

The driver sprang to the ground and threw open the door.

Dominick, the detective, saw, to his surprise, that they were before the hotel at which he had that very morning engaged board.

He stepped out of the cab with difficulty.

"I leave you here," he said.

"Can you walk?"

"Yes. Good-night—to-morrow I must see you again."

"You shall!" cried Simon, and then, springing from the cab, he insisted upon leading the crippled man carefully into the hotel.

As he turned to leave him, he whispered in his ear:

"One word more, Dominick Roach. The body upon which I saw your companion rain down those murderous blows was not that of your father!"

With these words Detective Simon Munhall turned and walked hurriedly away.

CHAPTER XII.

THE BALL OF THE CIRCLE OF HARMONY—THE ROBBERY OF THE JEWELS.

"Are you going to the ball this evening, Simon?"

"Not this evening—some other evening!"

The speakers were our young friend, Charley Evringham, and Mr. Detective Munhall.

The scene was the parlor of their Brooklyn boarding-house. The time—evening—a week or so after the disclosures of the last chapter.

"No old gags, now, Mr. Munhall—Simon, I mean—but seriously, I am going to the great French ball at the Academy of Music. What's this they call it? I can't say it in French, but it means 'Ball of the Circle of Harmony.'"

"Bal de Cercle de 'Harmonie.'"

"That's it; and I'm going, and I want you to go, too. I've wanted to see one of these French balls for years, so I got two tickets to-day—one for myself and one for you. You had better come."

"No, no, Charley, I had rather stay in to-night; it isn't often I get a night off, and having got one I want to read."

"Oh, bother your reading! Say, Simon, I want you to come, and that's all there is about it!"

"Well, well, my boy, if you have set your mind on my going as strongly as all that, why——"

"You'll go?"

"I suppose I must, but I haven't got any costume."

"We can stop at a costumer's on the Bowery and get plenty.

"Have you got yours?"

"Yes."

"Well, what is it?"

"A harlequin's dress—all red and green and yellow, and covered with spangles."

"That will be immense!"

"You can just bet it is; but come, if we're going, it's time we were off."

"All right, Charley; I'll be ready in a few moments. By the way, have you seen your friend Dominick, the detective, lately?"

"Never since the day he joined the force."

"How came you to send him to me, Charley?"

"Well, I promised not to speak of his affairs, but I suppose I may say that much—because he asked me to do so; he saved my life, you know."

"Yes, yes, I know; but, Charley, do you know how strongly you resemble that man?"

"Yes; so they say."

"They say—who says? I thought you had never seen him since he joined the force?"

"Oh, some men who saw us together."

"What men?"

"Now, see here, Mr. Detective, you can't pump me!" cried the boy, laughing. "I promised this man I would not talk about his affairs, and I won't, and that's all there is to it! Of course I look like him. Any one can see that—maybe he's my father. I'll never tell you!"

Charley Evringham spoke lightly and without thought, therefore he was somewhat surprised to see the effect which his words produced upon Detective Munhall.

That individual stood gazing at him with great intentness for an instant. Then muttering something to himself, he abruptly left the room.

When he returned, a few moments later, his surprised look had disappeared.

Telling Charley that he was all ready to accompany him, they left the house together and hurried to New York.

"Stopping at a costumer's on the Bowery, the detective procured the costume of a Turk, with wide blue breeches, red coat, black stockings and a white turban, having upon it a gilt crescent of enormous size.

This accomplished they hurried to the Academy of Music; and being shown to the dressing-rooms hastily donned their costumes and were ushered into the ball.

It was a gay and startling spectacle.

The immense auditorium of the building, floored over and turned into a ball-room, was all ablaze with light and filled with merry maskers.

Flags of all nations hung from the walls in festoons; the back of the stage was buried in flowers.

The floor itself was alive with dancers clad in every costume that the most fertile brain could devise.

And it was early yet—the ball had but just begun.

Here the British Lion and the Russian Bear stalked majestically in friendly embraces, arm-in-arm; there, a strutting Turkey Gobbler bore upon his wing a delicate flower-girl,

A stately Puritan, with steeple-crowned hat, and a face a yard long at least, looking as though he were fresh from enacting the latest Connecticut Blue Law extent—prohibiting the eating of any food but baked beans on Sunday—was making desperate love to a young lady in the light and airy costume of the ball.

At one end of the great hall two gay and festive individuals were to be seen, each with an enormous nose, one resembling a flageolet and the other a bassoon, playing what appeared to be a popular air upon their respective organs; while just beyond was his Satanic majesty himself, bestowing his sweetest smiles upon a base viol, with a jockey hat and feather.

It was a festive scene indeed, and one long to be remembered by all who witnessed it.

The Turk and the harlequin joined the merry throng, and plunged boldly into the thickest of the fun.

For several hours the ball proceeded merrily, both Charley and his friend enjoying themselves with the rest.

Just before midnight the boy found himself in one of those little ante-rooms just back of the stage.

Being wearied with dancing, he flung himself into a chair to rest.

At the same moment his attention was attracted by the peculiar actions of a couple who had entered the room just behind.

One was a man dressed in the garb of a cavalier, from whose unwelcome advances his companion, a delicate flower-girl, seemed trying to escape.

"Unhand me, sir," she cried pushing away her importunate suitor, who, at this moment sought to throw his arm around her neck.

"One kiss, Pauline, only one!" exclaimed the cavalier, in thick, husky tones.

"Leave me—leave me!" cried the girl. "You are grossly intoxicated! Had I only known you would treat me thus I would have died rather than have come with you to this place!"

"But you shall kiss me!" her companion replied, and rushing to the girl's side, he was about to execute his cowardly purpose, when a blow from a harlequin felled him to the floor.

"Lie there, you unmannerly brute!" cried Charley, spurning him with his foot.

The man was too much intoxicated to rise unassisted, but in his efforts to do so his mask fell off and disclosed his features.

"Ah, my gay bird, I've seen you before!" cried Charley, looking down at him. "You are the noble dude who deserted his companion at the Union Square Theater last December."

The flower girl started forward.

"And you, sir?" she cried.

"I am the young man who came to the rescue of this fellow's companion," replied Charley. "Don't be alarmed, young lady; I will see that you meet with no further insult."

"I cannot sufficiently express my thanks to you, sir," replied the flower-girl, trembling with excitement, "but do not hurt him. He is not in a condition to be responsible for his actions."

Charley was about to reply, when the flower-girl—apparently not knowing what she did—suddenly removed her mask also.

The boy gazed at her features in astonishment.

It was as he suspected—the young girl to whose assistance he had gone at the time of the panic in the theater.

But it was not this that held his attention.

He saw now with startling distinctness what he had not observed at that time in the more uncertain light of the theater.

The face of the flower-girl before him was the exact reproduction of his own image but in female form!

It seemed as though he were gazing at his own reflection in a mirror!

Mechanically he raised his hand to his face and withdrew the mask which concealed it.

The effect upon his companion was instantaneous.

"Who are you?" she exclaimed, starting back in wonder and astonishment.

Charley was about to reply, when a hand from behind suddenly grasped his arm just as he was in the act of restoring the mask to his face.

He turned and beheld the tall and stately form of a lady, clad in the peculiar head-dress and ruffle in which painters are fond of representing Queen Elizabeth, leaning upon the arm of a monk.

About her neck sparkled a collar of diamonds, emeralds, and rubies, of priceless value.

For an instant the lady gazed upon the youth in silence.

"Young man, in Heaven's name, who are you?" she hoarsely exclaimed, letting go her hold upon his arm, and clinging to her companion for support.

"My name is Charley Evringham," answered the boy, lost in amazement.

"Evringham! Evringham!" continued the lady, looking from his face to that of the flower-girl; "the name tells me nothing, but the face—Doctor, is it not wonderful?"

She turned, as though addressing the monk at her side.

Before this personage had an opportunity to reply, another and more startling figure joined the little group.

It was that of a hermit.

(This story to be continued in our next issue.)

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